

Pam 92
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A
L E T T E R
T O

Mr. Samuel Chandler;

BEING

A VINDICATION of some Passages in the
*Three Letters to a Gentleman dissenting
from the Church of England, and the
'Appendix to the Third of those
Letters concerning Subscription.*

AGAINST

His Reflections in his late Book, entitled, *The Case
of Subscription to Explanatory Articles of Faith,
as a Qualification for Admission into the
Christian Ministry.*

WITH

Some Considerations upon the Speech (therein published)
of John Alphonso Turretine, previous to the Abolition
of all Subscriptions at Geneva.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.

Sometime Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

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L E T T E R
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Mr. *Samuel Chandler, &c.*

S I R,

I Must own to you, I was mightily pleased, and even quite charmed, with your setting out in your late *Case of Subscription to Explanatory Articles of Faith, &c.* where you assure us, that "Years and Experience had much *softened* your Mind, as to *Party Affairs*, and the lesser Differences subsisting between the *Established Church*, and the *Protestant Dissenters* from it, and that you have long taken a sincere Pleasure in thinking well of, and being *kindly affectioned* to all, without Exception, who *love the Truth in Christ*, and seek after *the things that make for Peace*;" at the same Time, letting us understand, that you esteemed many of the Clergy of the National Church (as well by Reason of their *Piety*, as of their *known Learning*, Candour, and Moderation) and particularly those *Reverend Prelates* who now *so worthily* fill her *Sees*, to be really such Persons as you delighted to adorn with your good Opinion, and to set your kindly Affections on; and professing that, "this gave you the most agreeable Prospect that Peace and Harmony were growing Blessings amongst us." After these *Acknowledgments* and

Professions I had no manner of Doubt, but you were now able to manage a Controversy with *us Churchmen* with at least as much Temper, Calmness, and Civility, as you was, *many Years ago*, observed to do, when you was dealing *only* with the *Infidels*. And for my own Part, I expected in you the fairest and most equitable Adversary, forasmuch as you had no Reason, that I know of, to think otherwise of me than as a *Lover of Truth*, and a *Follower of Peace*, though not always, perhaps, exactly in the way that happens to be most to your liking. And I flattered myself, *we* should now exhibit to the World a Controversy carried on, if not with so great *Learning* and *Ingenuity*, at least on one Side, as some former Controversies have been, yet, on both, with greater *Civility* and *Politeness*, and more Charity than has been usual, and set those who shall come after us an Example highly deserving their Imitation. But, alas, it was not long I could please myself with these Thoughts; for, as I read on, I perceived a *growing* Acrimony of Style, plainly shewing, what I was not before so well aware of, that the *softening of the Mind* is not always immediately followed with a corresponding and proportionate softening of a Gentleman's Manner in writing Controversy, and that the one may be, a considerable Time, *posterior* to the other. I think, I can plainly discover some Inclination, yet remaining in you, to scorn and insult an Adversary, to pervert his Meaning, to disguise and misrepresent his Reasonings, and to put a harsher Construction upon his Words, than common Charity will, or the Expressions themselves can be made to bear. And I am not without some Hope I shall be able to make you, Sir, thoroughly sensible of this, before I put an End to your Trouble.

You have been pleased to represent me, and, I think,

think, very unjustly, as not only reviving this Controversy, and stirring up the almost dead Coals of Contention about Gowns and Cloaks, Bows and Crosses, Godfathers, and the like, but striving for them, as *pro aris et focis*, and scarce allowing the Character of Christians to any, who are not as zealous for them, as myself. Now if by striving for those Things, you mean earnestly contending for the perpetual Use and Continuance of them in the Church, and pleading against any Alterations or Abatements, or giving them up, on any Consideration whatsoever; it is a very wrong and injurious Representation of my Sense and Conduct; for this I have nowhere done. On the contrary, I have plainly intimated my Judgment (and you, Sir, I presume, are fully apprized of it, long before now) that such Things may be very prudently parted with, if by that means the Schism may be healed, as your Writers constantly pretend, and bear the World in hand, it may. But if you mean nothing more than my asserting and maintaining the *Lawfulness* of them, the Thing is true; I have done it. But how *That* can be called, “Striving for them as *pro Aris et Focis*,” I don’t well understand. This I am sure of, I have not strove for them with a more flaming Zeal, than your Brethren constantly strive against them. But how could you, Sir, take upon you to say, “that I scarce allow to any the Character of Christians, who are not as zealous for them, as myself?” Have I any where said one Syllable upon that Head? Have I any where demurred to call such Christians? Can you quote any Passage in my Letters, or the Defences of them, where, tho’ I do allow them the Character of Christians, I appear, (as your Words plainly imply) to do it grudgingly, and unwillingly, and shew an Inclination to deny it, if I could? Have you any Foundation for charging me with

such a ridiculous Piece of Bigotry? If not, pray consider, if you have not injured me?

As to my reviving of the Controversy which had so long slept, I will tell you the Truth, and the Whole of it. Ever since I began to make any Observations upon the Ways of Dissenters, I have remarked two Things: One is, that the Opinion of their Lives being better than those of Churchmen (whether they really are, or are only supposed to be better, I am not now inquiring) has been a mighty Advantage to the Dissention, and gained it more Profelytes than, perhaps, any one Thing whatsoever. The other is, that the most common and popular Objections of Dissenters against Communion with the Established Church will hold equally good against Communion with their own Churches, inasmuch as they do the same Things, or Things tantamount to, and equally liable to Exception, with those which they commonly pretend to dissent from the Church for. And as neither of these Things seem to be observed or sufficiently considered, and applied to their proper Uses, by our Writers before me, I determined to do it myself, and have performed, according to my Abilities, what I proposed to do, in the *Three Letters to a Dissenting Gentleman*. But apprehending that the publishing of them might possibly bring on a Controversy, and I, by that means, be drawn into a tedious Debate, when I had, as I always have, Work enough of another Nature upon my Hands, I deferred the Publication of the first Letter a considerable Time, deliberating within myself, and advising with some learned Friends, whether the publishing what I had written, or, the suppressing of it would be best. However, I judged, upon the whole, there was no great Likelihood that *my* Performances would be much regarded, and bring upon me any farther Trou-

Trouble. And that I judged reasonably, may partly appear from the Event. For they did escape about three Years, without Animadversion; and this Reason, as I am informed, has been given for it, that as I was not a Man of any Eminence in the Church, and but little known in the World, it would not be prudent to make me more known and considered, and my Books, by having an Answer given them, so much the more sought after. In short, Sir, I had no other Thought than that my Writings would, of themselves, die in a little Time, as many Pieces, published, from Time to Time, by Dissenters, highly reflecting upon the Church, have done; and am ready to think you yourselves, for two or three Years, reckoned so too. It was this Consideration that determined me to publish. And so, Sir, you see, that tho' the Revival of the Controversy should follow, it was far from being in my Intention; and had it been possible to foresee that this would have been the Issue, and that I should have been obliged, as I have been, to write again and again in Defence of these same Letters, I am as certain, as I can be of any Thing in the World, that depends upon the free Determination of my own Will, they had never seen the Light.

Yet, after all, Sir, I don't perceive with what Justice or Propriety I can be said to have *blown the Coals of Contention*, and revived the Controversy, unless it be in Virtue of the Proverb, that *the second Blow makes the Quarrel*. But if it be the first, the Charge, I should think, ought to be fixed upon Dr. *Watts*, rather than me, who, in my First Letter, was little more than a bare Defendant of the Church against the groundless and unreasonable Imputations that Gentleman was pleased to fasten upon most of the Rites and Appointments of it, as if they naturally tended to the Discouragement and Hindrance

of Godliness. Nor will the Matter be mended, but rather made worse, if you should pretend the Doctor's Book was not *polemically*, but *practically* written. For to bring, as we say, *Head and Shoulders*, almost all the Points in Controversy between us into a Treatise of that Kind, professed to be written for no other Purpose but *the Revival of practical Religion amongst Christians*, does certainly shew a most hearty Good-will and Inclination * *to enter into the Merits of the Cause*, as, it seems, in *some Parts of your Ministrations* the Doctor thinks it *proper* for you to do. And as those heavy Imputations are mixed up with a great many serious and devout Thoughts, which serve, as a Vehicle, to convey into the Reader, and to disperse the more effectually through his whole Soul those Sentiments which were meant to be infused into him, there was certainly the more Need of an Antidote; and it is a Wonder to me, they did not meet with one, sooner than they did.

Neither does it appear to me to be true in fact, that *the Coals of Contention* were, at the Time of my writing, so nigh dead, as you make them to be. For were there not always divers Books coming abroad, one after another, reflecting upon the Church of *England*, more likely by far to stir up Strife, than my Letters, such as *The Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times*, *The Memorial of the Reformation*, *The History of the Puritans*, and, Sir, your own *History of Persecution*, all of them either full fraught with Controversy (*Historiographi Argumentosi*, as *Isaac Casaubon* speaks of *Baronius*, in relation to his *Annals* †) or most injurious Reflections not only upon Churchmen, but

* See *Humble Attempt*, p. 138.

† *Epistola dedicat. præfix. Exercit. ad Card. Baron. Proleg. et Annal.*

also upon the Doctrine, the Worship, and Government of the Church. And, indeed, it has constantly been your Practice to *batter* the Constitution of the Church of *England* from behind the *Mask* of History, whereby, it must be confessed, you are likely to gain (and, doubtless, propose to yourselves) very considerable Advantages. The Generality of Men, being great Lovers of History, will be (you know) desirous to read your Books, whereby the Prejudices you want to infuse will be much wider spread, than you could hope them to be by any Writings that are purely and professedly Controversial. And when any one reproves *you*, as you do *me*, with stirring up *the Coals of Contention*, and unseasonably reviving the Controversy betwixt us, you think you can bring yourselves off with saying, *you are but Historians, and Narrators of plain Facts*; an Excuse little better than it would be for me to say, I am but a Letter-Writer, and do only tell, in the Way of Charity and Friendship, a certain Gentleman of my Acquaintance what are my Thoughts about his dissenting from us. Besides your larger Historical Pieces now and then appearing, you have those of a smaller Size, almost continually playing against the Church. And if these have not produced any set Controversy, nor engaged the Attention of so many, as my Letters, one hardly knows how, have done; the Reason is, that either the learned Writers of our Church are not so apt, as some Folks are, to take Fire at every Insult that is offered it, or that they esteemed those Pieces too mean and contemptible for them to take Notice of.

But, Sir, what surprizes me is, that a Gentleman who is a known and strenuous Advocate for universal Liberty of Debate, and thinks that *even Infidels should not only be suffered, but even invited to speak out their Difficulties with Freedom, and to publish their*

*their Objections against Christianity**, should think me so extremely blameable for stirring up this Controversy, and is so loth that the Case of Non-conformity should be argued. The Bottom of this, one would think, must be, that when you are defending the Cause of Common Christianity, you have such a Consciousness of the Goodness of it, and your Abilities to defend it against all its Adversaries, as assures you of Victory, and therefore prompts you to *invite* them to the Combat; while some little Distrust of the Goodness of the Cause of Non-conformity makes you willing that Controversy should be let sleep. I don't wonder at this, when I consider the different Success you have had in these two Controversies. If I mistake not, it is agreed on all Hands you have constantly triumphed, when you have been defending the Truth and Certainty of Christianity. But when you have taken upon you to oppose all *legal Establishments* thereof, and particularly that in our Church, you have, I think, with all your great Abilities, as constantly miscarried. You may be able, perchance, to deal well enough, even in this Cause, with the mean Writer of the Three Letters; but you must not hope to be so successful, if you should come again to have any Gentleman of the same Size in Point of Reasoning and Erudition with the late excellent Dr. *Rogers*, to grapple with.

I know, you do pretend, you therefore esteem it a wrong Thing to revive the Controversy, "because there are other Things of more Importance, that deserve the most serious Attention of all Clergymen, about which they might employ their Zeal more to their own Comfort, and the Edification of the Church of God." I agree with you, Sir, there are; nor am I without all Employ-

* See the Preface to the *Discourse of the Nature and Use of Miracles, &c.*

ment of that Sort. Yet, I cannot, for my Life, help thinking, that while we are employing our chief Zeal in maintaining our common Principles, and endeavouring to recover the sinking Authority of Christian Piety and Virtue, while we are striving to put a Stop to the Progress of Infidelity and Popery amongst us, there is not the least Need we should lay aside all Thought about the lesser Matters (lesser, it may be, in comparison, but not absolutely little) of Catholick Communion, and reconciling Dissenters to the Church. Do you think, Sir, the Government was to blame for the Endeavours it used, during the late War, to reduce the Smugglers (pardon me, Sir, for I assure you I don't mean to insinuate a Comparison between their Practices and yours, but mention them only as they are real Enemies to the Nation, as you are to the Church) do you think (I say) the Government was to blame for endeavouring to suppress or reduce *these*, and to make them useful Subjects? And would you have had them let alone, because there were other Enemies from whom we had more to fear? I hope you don't expect that every Clergyman and Dissenting Minister in *Great Britain* should write a Book against Popery or Infidelity. I doubt we are not, all of us, fit for that Service: And such of *us* as are *not* may employ ourselves, to our own Comfort, and the Benefit of God's Church, in the less important, and more easy Services of shewing *you* the Error of your Ways, and bringing *you* back from your perverse Wanderings. I assure you, Sir, I am, as I verily believe, edifying the Church, and laying in a Stock of Comfort for the Remainder of my Life, while I am thus employed; I mean, so long as I continue to carry on this Controversy (and that, I hope, will be so long as I carry it on *at all*) in such a Manner, as is becoming the Character of a good Clergyman.

I think,

I think, I have hitherto done it in a Manner as decent, temperate, and equitable, as you could well desire ; have shewn towards the whole Body of Dissenters a hearty Good-will, and treated them all with as much Civility and Respect as has been done by any Writer, perhaps, before me. And if those who write on the contrary Part do but know how to treat the Church and Churchmen in the same decent and respectful Manner, it is impossible any ill Consequences should arise from the Revival of this Controversy. For I am pretty much, Sir, of your Opinion (to which, I hope, one of these Days, after a few *more Years*, and some *longer Experience*, your Practice will be yet more perfectly conformable) that “ Controversies in Religion managed
 “ with Moderation, and Good-humour, and a
 “ strict Regard to Truth and Honour, would be
 “ *not only* the most agreeable Entertainment, *but*
 “ *also* tend to the Discovery of Truth, the clearing
 “ up Mistakes, the Removal of Prejudices, and
 “ the Confirmation of every Thing that is truly
 “ good and sacred *.” Our present Controversy may be productive of these Effects, and of other Consequences good and great, if some People don’t hinder it. You are not ignorant, Sir, it was the publishing my Letters that gave Rise (and you know also by what Train) to a late Attempt for the uniting of Protestants (all sober Protestants) which you yourself have been labouring in, and which I am satisfied may be effected, if the visible Backwardness of your Brethren, or the Wildness and Extravagance of their Demands does not obstruct it. And if, by Occasion of my reviving this Controversy, such a Union should come, at last, to be effected, it will then be, I suppose, in your Opinion, as well as mine, a most happy Thing that I did revive it.

* Preface to the *Vindication of the Hist. of the Old Test.* p. 30.
 But,

But, “ my Design (you say p. 3.) in publishing
 “ those Letters does not seem candid, and suitable
 “ to the Character of a rational Divine. The Title
 “ Page, (you observe) informs you, my Design
 “ was to reflect back the Objections of the Dissen-
 “ ters against the Church of *England*, upon them-
 “ selves, and particularly, to retort the Charge of
 “ Imposition”. Look again, Sir, into the Title
 Page, and there you will find I had another Design,
 which it was not, it seems, for your Purpose to take
 Notice of, namely, to refute the great and popular
 Pleas of Dissenters against the Communion of the
 Church. This Part of my Design I hope you will
 allow to be candid and rational enough. And why
 not, I pray, the other? No, you say; the other
 Part of the Design was not *rational*. For supposing
I had, or could recriminate, as you call it, or reflect
back upon yourselves your Objections against the
Church of England, and, particularly, retort the
Charge of Imposition, would this vindicate the Impo-
sitions of the Church? I don’t say, it would; but
 that was not my Aim in retorting them: What I
 proposed by it was, as you may see in the Preface
 to the Second Letter, first, *to stop your Mouths,*
and keep you, in Time to come, from attacking the
Church with these Objections, in so triumphant a
Manner as you were wont to do; and then, (which
 was a View much more important) *to set before you*
a plain Argument for Conformity, which has been hi-
therto very little, if at all, pressed upon you. For if
all our Churches are alike or equally faulty and de-
fective, why should you make it a greater Difficulty to
conform to the Established, than to any other? In a
 Word, it was the Drift and Design of my Letters
 to vindicate the Church of *England* in those Things
 which you object to it, as the Grounds and Reasons
 of your Separation, which I think I have done un-
 der

der every Head I have spoken to; and then, sup-
 posing (not granting, as you would insinuate I do)
 they were not capable of being vindicated, but
 really indefensible, to make it plainly appear, that
 you, in your Churches, have either *the self same*, or
 the like Things, imposed on you. And the Use I
 proposed to make of this was drawn up in the con-
 cluding Paragraph of my last Letter, thus — “ If
 “ you now find your Objections pinch yourselves,
 “ as much as *us*; if you plainly perceive — there
 “ are in your Churches Inexpediences for Inexpe-
 “ diences, Defects for Defects, Blemishes for Ble-
 “ mishes, Irregularities and Abuses for Abuses and
 “ Irregularities in ours, your Obligation to Con-
 “ formity remains. In such a Case, (that is, *where*
 “ *both the Established and the Dissenting Churches*
 “ *are alike faulty*) you cannot pretend any Obli-
 “ gation upon Conscience to oppose the Established,
 “ by forming Parties against it, or by withdrawing
 “ your own Submission from it, but may as well
 “ conform, as dissent. And then there are many
 “ *external Considerations*, and *Views of public Uti-*
 “ *lity*, which will make it your Duty, and should
 “ determine you to do so. Your Conformity, Sir,
 “ to the Established Religion (*in that Case*) is but
 “ shewing a proper Deference and Respect to the
 “ Laws, and public Wisdom of your Country.
 “ It will be adding Strength and Security to the
 “ Government (for the Established Religion is al-
 “ ways esteemed the Pillar and Support of it) and
 “ be promotive of Civil Peace. And as the *Estab-*
 “ *lished* is also the *general* Religion, professed by
 “ the vast Majority of the People, your falling in
 “ with *That* will be pursuing the surest, and most
 “ effectual, as well as the most compendious Way
 “ for the restoring and establishing Christian Peace
 “ and Unity amongst us.” This, Sir, is the Pro-
 cedure

cedure of my Argument; and I am willing to leave it to every *rational* Divine, if it be not perfectly just and *rational*.

To discredit this Argument for Conformity, from your imitating in your own Congregations those Practices which you complain of in the Church, and for which you profess you withdraw from it, you tell me of a Book, a Popish Book, *The Catholic Christian instructed*, undertaking to demonstrate a Conformity between the *English* and *Romish* Church. Sir, I have seen the Book; but I think the Writer does not pretend to perform more than this — *viz.* to shew, that there are several Observances retained in our Sacred Offices, which we use in common with the Church of *Rome*. The Things wherein this Conformity is pointed out are only — our having the same Churches which were built by our Popish Ancestors, and dedicated to the Saints; our having Altars in them, as they have; baptizing, as they do, with the Sign of the Cross; our having a Liturgy, or Common Prayer, many of the Lessons or Prayers of which are borrowed from the Mass; our having the same Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, Surplices and Organs; observing Lents and Vigils, Godfathers and Godmothers in Baptism, Churching Women after Child-bearing, and Consecration of Churches. But does he pretend to shew there is any Conformity between the two Churches *in those very Things*, or in *other Things of the same Kind*, which we constantly allege as the Grounds and Reasons of our Separation from his Church, as I have shewn there is, between the Church of *England* and your Churches, *in those very Things*, or *Things tantamount to those*, for which you pretend to separate from ours? Does he propose to shew, that we hold (for Instance) the absurd and dangerous Doctrine of Transubstantiation, (one of
the

the Grounds of our Separation from his Church) that if they worship Bread, so do we, or if not Bread, yet a Stone, a Fish, or a Serpent; and if they take away the Cup from the Laity (another of the Grounds of our Separation) we do the same, or if we do not deprive them of the Cup, we do of the Bread, and give them the Cup only, which would be as great a Sacrilege, and Mutilation of *Christ's* Institution, as the other. Had he pretended to make out these Things, or any Thing like them, and there was any Appearance of his having made out what he proposed, his Design had been very just, and not *unsuitable to the Character of a rational Divine*. He had taken the same Way with us that I do with you, a proper and reasonable Way, most certainly, to make *us* of the Church of *England* think better of his Church, and reconcile us to it. And if he had made appear *such a Conformity* between the two Churches, I, for my Part, should henceforward have thought it a Matter of pretty much Indifferency, which of the two I was of, and held it right, upon divers *external Considerations*, and *Views of public Utility*, to be of this or that (supposing, I mean, I could be obliged to be of, and must live in external Communion with one or t'other) as either of them should be the Established, or the general Religion of the Country where I reside; just as I think it right in our Protestant Dissenters to return to the Communion of the Established Church, when they are plainly shewn, as I think they have been, that they, in their public Administrations, and otherwise, do really practise *the self-same Things*, or Things liable to the self same *Exceptions* with those which they exclaim against in the Church of *England*, and on account of which they constantly declare they hold themselves obliged to withdraw from it.

Your

Three Letters to a Dissenting Gentleman. 17

Your next Observation is not very material, being no more than this, “ that I complain of your Churches being so secret in all their Ways, that there is no knowing what they are, but to find them out we must grope and feel for them, as in the Dark”. I desire, Sir, to know by what Authority, tho’ I plainly perceive with what View, you have taken upon you to alter my Words. I say, *there is scarce any knowing*; you make me say, *There is no knowing*, what your Ways are, that with some little Shew and Appearance of Truth you might say, as, belike, you had a Mind to do, that ^a *I write about what I own I do not understand*. And again ^b that *your Secrecy is such that I own I cannot hurt you*. If *there is scarce any knowing*, I hope there is *some* knowing what your Ways are, and that they may be, by searching, tho’ with some Difficulty, found out, at least so far as will answer, tolerably well, the Ends I proposed by it. “ You are sorry, I find, I should take on myself such an uncomfortable Office, as groping in the Dark.” And you may have Reason; since I have fortunately stumbled upon some of your Ways, which you fancied were either great Secrets, or little minded, and have held them up to the Notice and Observation of the World; tho’, without Question, there are many more, and ^c you plainly *own* there are, which *it would be no Service either to you, or to the Cause of Religion in general*, to be disclosed, and which therefore it is your Prudence to conceal. A Confession which those who find themselves inclined to your Ways, but are not yet gone into them, would do well to take Notice of.

You are mistaken, Sir, if you imagine *I want to know the private Affairs of the dissenting Churches*, and, to that End, *to be admitted into your Vestries*.

^a Page 4.

^b Page 5.

^c Page 6.

No, I protest to you, I have no Curiosity of that Sort to be gratified : I want no more to be admitted into your Vestries, than into a Free-Masons Lodge. For me, you may do there whatever you please, and deal with *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, *Priscilla* and *Maximilla* in what Manner you think fit. The Execution and Management of your Discipline we are content to leave to yourselves, and only wish you would oblige us with an authentic and complete System of Rules and Directions, such as you hold yourselves obliged to walk by, a particular Account of the precise Manner wherein all religious Exercises are performed, and Christian Ordinances administered amongst you, with such a Book of Discipline as the Reformed Churches in *France* had, and were governed by. For this would be sufficient, and give us all the Light into the Ways of your Churches we desire, or have any Occasion for.

You do indeed tell me (and herein you jump with my former Correspondent, the *anonymous* Letter-Writer) that “ tho’ you have no common Rules “ which you oblige one another, by human Canons, and Constitutions Ecclesiastical, to walk “ by, you have, nevertheless, Rules of Discipline “ and Worship, which the sacred Writings prescribe you.” And so, I perceive, your Forefathers, who left you a *Directory for the public Worship of God throughout the three Kingdoms*, were not only needlessly but very ill employed, as setting up human Ordinances and Constitutions, instead of the sacred Writings, to guide you in all the Parts of public Worship. They, it seems, thought they were acting a very laudable Part in “ endeavouring “ to hold forth such Things as are of divine Institution in every Ordinance, and to set forth other “ Things according to the Rules of Christian Prudence, agreeable to the general Rules of the Word

“ of

Three Letters to a Dissenting Gentleman. 19

“ of God.” But their wiser Children will not endure the Mention of any *Rules of Christian Prudence* in Matters of Discipline or Worship, how agreeable soever to the general Directions of holy Scripture ; but the Scripture, with *Them*, is the only Rule to be regarded in those Matters ; tho’ I cannot but observe, that, on divers Occasions, you make no Difficulty to own, that this same *Directory* is the Rule you generally walk by : And Dr. Calamy tells us, *Your Examination and Ordination of Ministers, in particular, are managed according to the Rules laid down in it ; and also, that it gives Direction about the several Parts of public Worship, which are generally approved among you^b*. I see plainly, Sir, that the Word of God is your common and only Rule of Discipline and Worship, which you think yourselves obliged to attend to, or it is *not*, and you can admit, as well as we, human Ordinances and Constitutions, *not disagreeable to the general Directions of holy Scripture*, to be also a Rule, in those Matters, just as the Argument pinches one Way or the other, and the present Occasion seems to require.

But since you bear us in hand, and do so positively declare, that the sacred Writings are your only Rule of Discipline and Worship, and would have us think you do nothing, in either, but what they *particularly* and *precisely* prescribe, let us see, if you please, how that Matter stands : And because I would not be tedious, I will confine myself to your Worship. You may be sure, I do not pretend to make it a Question, whether the Scripture does not prescribe Prayer, Supplication, giving of Thanks, Psalmody, and has not appointed Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. That is not the Question ; but

^a Preface to the *Directory*.
Dissenters, &c. p. 45.

^b *Account of the Protestant*

the Question is, Whether the particular Manner, the several Rites, Modes, and Circumstances with which those Offices are performed, and Ordinances administred, in your Churches, are, all, prescribed by any *Canon of Christ, and his Apostles*. Is there, Sir, any Canon of their prescribing directing you to take off your Hats, when you enter the Place of Worship, or when the Worship is beginning? Or forbidding you to say *Amen*, when the Minister concludes his Prayer? Is there not rather one that prescribes it? And if so, why are your People never directed and called upon to say, *Amen*, to your Prayers? It is because, if they were once accustomed to say, *Amen*, with an audible Voice, in your Meetings, they would not think it so strange a Thing as they do, to say, in our Churches, what is no more than *Amen* in other Words, *We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord*, and might come, by and by, to reconcile themselves to it. What Canon of Scripture appoints (any more than it appoints Chancellors, Archdeacons, Commissaries, Officials, &c.) such Officers as our Parish Clerks, or, Sir, the Clerks of your Congregations, or a select Company of Singers, such as you have in some of your Churches, who are to set the Psalm, and to lead the Congregation in, or perhaps exclude them from the singing of it? Does the Scripture say, the Psalm shall be, or shall not be read, Line by Line? Or that you are to make use of Psalms in Metre, the Psalms of *David*, or *Dr. Watts*, or sometimes of the one, and sometimes of the other? Do you not govern yourselves in all these things by the *Rules of Christian Prudence*, not disagreeing with the general Rules of Scripture? And because you say, “you find nothing in the *Bible* of the Cross in Baptism, and therefore never use it,” I desire to know, if you find there any Order, when you baptize a Child, to demand the
Name

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Name of it, and, that being told you, to call it by its Name, when the baptismal Words are pronouncing. Or, have you there any Declaration, such as you have in the *Directory*, that, *for the manner of baptizing, it is not only lawful, but sufficient, and most expedient, to be by pouring, or sprinkling the Water on its Face.* Is there any Canon of holy Scripture requiring the Parents, or either of them, to stand forth, and undertake for the religious Education of their Child? Or did our Lord, in the Institution, or have the Apostles bid you make use of any Words of Instruction touching the Nature and Ends of Baptism, exhort the Parent, admonish those that are present, and, all being done, order you to make a suitable Prayer, that God would bless and sanctify his own Ordinance, at this time, *as if the Infant, without all this Ado, was not fully and perfectly baptized,* or our Lord's Institution, which is very short, neither more nor less than baptizing with Water, *in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,* was not sufficient? And as to the Lord's Supper, where do you find in the Scripture-Canon any Direction about mentioning (* as is ordinarily done amongst you, if Dr. Calamy says right) before Admission, the Names of all such as desire to be admitted to it, that so the Congregation may have Opportunity to object to them, if their Lives and Conversations are known to be unsuitable to the Christian Profession? Or any Direction to administer this Sacrament at Noon, and not in the Evening, as the way is in most of your Churches; or, in the Evening, and not at Noon, as the Practice in some is? You may be, 'tis like, better acquainted with your *Bible*, than I am; and you had need be, to find there any Canons and Constitutions expressly

* *Account of Protestant Dissenters in England.*

injoining these things. And though, as you tell me, you have no human Canons, and Constitutions ecclesiastical, no kind of Law injoining them, *You are a Law to yourselves*, and in your respective Congregations, do really *oblige one another* to submit to them, under the Penalty of being excluded from those sacred Offices and Administrations.

And here, Sir, I must beg your Excuse, when I take the Liberty to tell you, that you seem to me to reason a little oddly, upon the Subject of indifferent Things, such as the Cross at Baptism, and Kneeling at the Lord's Supper. You cite a Canon ^a of our Church, asserting that *Things of themselves indifferent do, in some sort, alter their Natures, when they are either commanded or forbidden by a lawful Magistrate, or Authority, and may not be omitted at every Man's Pleasure, contrary to the Law, when they are commanded; nor refused, when they are prohibited.* You seem to think this a strange Principle for any Protestant Church to hold; and you esteem yourselves obliged to forsake the Communion of our Church on the account of it, because (you say) "she makes
" necessary in Religion unnecessary Things, and
" alters the Nature of indifferent Things into Things
" essential and obligatory." But pray, Sir, reflect, if you yourself do not own, *in some sort*, the same Principle. I am sure, your Churches and all the Churches in the World *act* upon it, whether they *own* it by any express Declaration, or not. Is it not your Opinion, that a thing indifferent in itself, when it comes to be commanded by any human Authority, alters, *in some sort*, its Nature, and is no longer so? I think, you will confess it does: Only you will say, it alters its Nature *the other way*, and instead of becoming, by being commanded, necessary and obligatory, it becomes immediately unwarrant-

^a Can. 30.

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able, and sinful. And which of these Changes in the Nature of the Thing may be most rationally asserted, I leave *common Sense* to judge. But I proceed to your next Observation.

“It will seem (you say) a little strange, that I should spend near a dozen Pages in rebuking you for using the Posture of Standing in your public Prayers on the Lord’s Day, and recommending to you, with so much Warmth, that of Kneeling, as more proper and solemn.” And to me, Sir, it seems a little strange, that, when you was examining what I had said about your standing at public Prayer, you did not think fit to take the least Notice of what I had suggested about your kneeling, so universally as you seem to do, in Family-Prayer. You would have done well to have given us a Reason (and from *you*, Sir, we should have expected a better Reason than that commonly given, *viz.* the want of Conveniency for kneeling in your Meetings, which is plainly nothing but a Sham) why you so much encourage, and stand up so stiffly for that Posture, in your public Devotions; and at the same time *think it right* to use Kneeling in the more private Devotions of the Family, wherein the outward Solemnity of the Service might be, methinks, a great deal better dispensed with; especially too, as I had suggested my Suspicions, which I am apt to think will appear to all sensible and observing Men natural and reasonable, that you so warmly contend for Standing, at your public Prayers, more out of *Policy* (that your Worship may have a different Face from ours) than any Persuasion you are under of the greater, or equal Fitness and Propriety of it.

It also appears, I must needs say, somewhat odd, that you should “hope the numerous Examples brought by the Dissenting Gentleman, in his Answer to me, from the holy Scriptures, will justify

“you in your Standing.” He did not, Sir, *bring* them to me, *from thence*, as you know, or might have known, but only *returned* them to me. I presented them first to *Him*, in my Second Letter; so little did I study, as some Folks would have done, to conceal any thing that might seem to favour an Adversary. He *returned* them to me; but he did not think fit to return the Answer I sent with them, but unfairly kept it to himself; neither do you take any Notice of it. This obliged me, in the Second Defence of my Letters, to repeat it. And thither, Sir, to save me the Trouble of transcribing it a second time (for it is pretty long) I must refer you for it.

You also plead the universal Practice of the primitive Church in their Worship on the Lord’s Day, in Support of the Custom of your Churches. And you cite *Justin Martyr, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertulian, Origen*, and divers others of the Antients, “with their Translations in the Margin, that the Dissenters may see how ancient and justifiable their Form of Worship is, in this Respect.” Your Pains, Sir, upon this Head might have been well spared; for I had before owned the Thing which you have so elaborately proved, and moreover said, that *every Body knew it to be so*. But that you may not seem to have taken these Pains altogether in vain, I will, with your Leave, try to avail myself a little of your Labours; and hope I shall make such Observations upon the Quotations you have produced, as will keep your Friends from so falling in Love with the primitive Church for being like themselves, as, from your Account and Representation of the Matter, they may be apt to do.

When you was telling them that the primitive Church worshipped standing on the Lord’s Day, I did, at first, somewhat marvel you did not tell them,

as I had done, they also worshipped in that Posture on all Days of the Week besides, between *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*. At first, I did really think you had neglected, or overlooked an Advantage I had given you, in not extending the Time of their praying standing, so far as you might have done, with Truth. But I presently considered, that, as your Churches have none of their *Easters*, none of their *Whitsuntides*, or other Festivals, and scarcely any public Worship but on the Lord's Day, it might not, perhaps, be convenient to let the People know there were any such Things in the primitive Church. And besides, if they were to be let into the Secret that the antient Christians prayed *standing*, on all the week Days between those Festivals, they would naturally suspect, and indeed conclude, that they prayed kneeling, on those Days, all the rest of the Year. And from thence another untoward Suspicion or Conclusion would be apt to arise, that they did not esteem Standing the fittest and most suitable Posture in itself for that Service, but for some other Reasons were determined, at those particular Times, to make use of it. And this was really the Case. The primitive Church, Sir, did not do, as your Churches do: in the Apostles Days, there is good Reason to believe, they assembled daily; and if, some time afterwards, during the Rage of Persecution, they contented themselves with meeting together, at least in a general Assembly both of City and Country, on the Lord's Day only, or not much oftener, they quickly return'd to the antient apostolic Practice, and had their daily Morning and Evening Service. And at all these Times, excepting the Days before mentioned, they, for the most part, prayed kneeling. For I own, at some of their Prayers, which the Nature of the Service might possibly direct, they prayed, even then, standing. And if your Churches would

would imitate them in *this*, kneeling (suppose) in your Prayer before Sermon, wherein *Confession of Sin*, and *Petition*, might be the subject Matter enlarged upon, and standing after Sermon, at some other Parts of Prayer, such as Thanksgiving, and blessing of God, which I had the Boldness, as, perhaps you may remember, in one of my Letters to recommend to you; I should have little or nothing, on this account, to say against you.

As their worshipping kneeling was the most general Practice, so I must observe, what I before hinted, that their worshipping standing, when they did so, was not grounded on any Persuasion and Belief, that this Posture was equally suitable, and much less more suitable than the other, to all the Parts of Prayer, but on a Reason of a quite different Nature, to wit, a peculiar Significancy that was in it. Some of the Passages by you cited plainly shew this — as particularly that of St. *Austin*^a; and that *apud Auctor. Resp. ad Orthod. ad Quæst. 115.*^b which I also have placed, as you have done, with your own Translations, in the Margin, that the Dissenters may see I do not grudge them, nor am afraid to give them the Sight of your Citations, and may understand, how

^a *Stamus orantes, quod est signum Resurrectionis. Unde etiam omnibus Diebus Dominicis, id ad Altare observatur. We stand at our Prayers in Remembrance of the Resurrection. Therefore every Lord's Day this Posture is retained at the Altar. Epist. 55. ad Januar. c. 15. § 28. et c. 17. § 32. Ed. Bened.*

^b Το δε εν τη Κυριακη μη κλινειν γινυ, συμβολον εστι της Αναστασιως — εκ των Αποστολικων δε Χρονων η τοιαυτη συνθησα ελαβε την αρχην, καθως φησιν, ο μακαριος Ειρηναιος ο Μαρτυρ και Επισκοπος Λυγδουν εν τω περι της Πασχα λογω. *The not bending the Knee on the Lord's Day, is a Symbol of the Resurrection, a Custom that had its Rise from the very Times of the Apostles.* 'Tis pity you did not go on to translate the Remainder, which would have shewn the unlearned Dissenters, that *Irenæus*, who was Disciple to St. *Polycarp*, who was Disciple to St. *John*, who lay in our Lord's Bosom, was Bishop of *Lyons*.

modern and unjustifiable some of those Principles are which oblige them, you say, to renounce the Communion of our Church. From those Places it appears, that their praying *standing*, at such Times as they did so, was not chosen *for itself*, as if it were a Posture as proper as kneeling at all Times, and for all Sorts of Prayer, but was observed in *Memory*, or *Token* of our Lord's Resurrection from the Dead, and as a proper *Symbol* or Expression of the Hope, and certain Expectation they had of their own Resurrection. On that blessed Day when he rose from the Dead for our Justification, they esteemed it a heinous Offence to fast; and neither on that Day, nor on any one of the fifty Days between *Easter* and *Pentecost*, would they prostrate themselves, or kneel down at their public Prayers, but rather chose to abate at such Times of those Postures, for the sake of shewing forth, by their rising up, and putting their Bodies into an erect Posture, the Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and exhibiting a kind of Prefiguration of their own.

It also appears from one of the Passages you have produced, *that* from *Tertullian*, ^a that this Posture was properly *imposed*, not, perhaps, at the Beginning, by the Authority of Synods, but by *the common Law* of the Church. It was considered as a Tradition that had its Rise from the very Times of the Apostles, as one of your own Citations shews: It was always religiously observed; and whoever presumed to break it, was esteemed and treated as a disorderly Person: and there being some, at the Time of the Council of *Nice*, who took upon them to cross the general Custom of the Church, and to *kneel* when they should have *stood*, *that* Council thought fit to

^a Die Dominico Jejuniurn nefas ducimus, vel de Geniculis adorare. *De Coron.* c. 3. *We count it a Sin to fast, or worship upon our Knees, on the Lord's Day.*

make

make a Decree, that ^a *Prayers be offered to God standing.* The Conveniency and natural Fitness of this Custom was not the Ground and Reason of this Canon; but the Reason of it, as the Canon itself informs you, was, *that all Things might be uniformly performed in every Parish, or Diocese, and that a Practice, which, as they conceived, had been handed down from the Apostles, and had such an important Significancy in it, might not fall, by Degrees, as they apprehended it was going to do, into absolute Neglect and Disuse.*— Upon the whole, Sir, you see this Custom of standing at Prayer in the primitive Church was a *Ceremony*, and, which is more, a *symbolical* one, and that too, really *imposed* upon the People. And as much as you would seem to applaud yourself in the Conformity of your Churches to the Primitive, in this Respect, you, upon your Principles, had you lived in the primitive Times, must, on this very Account, had there been nothing else, have been a Dissenter from it, as you now are from the Church of *England*, and ^b frankly confess you must have been also from the reformed Church of *France*, if you had happened to live in that Kingdom.

I can't apprehend, Sir, why, when I had been speaking of the different Manner of the antient Christians, and your standing in Prayer, quoting *Tertullian* for it, who represents them worshipping with lifting up their Eyes, and stretching out their Hands to Heaven; I say, I can't apprehend, why I should be thought so inadvertent or forgetful, in not remembering, if I had not remember'd, *in what Manner Tertullian explains himself upon this Head*, when he speaks of their *adoring with Modesty and Humility, not lifting up their Hands high, but moderately*

^a Can. 20.

^b *Case of Subscription*, p. 146.

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and decently, nor boldly elevating their Faces to Heaven. For where have I given any other Representation of their Practice? Where have I recommended, or spoken one Word in Favour of those Gesticulations, or that bold Erection of the Countenance, which he censures? Or where have I censured that decent and modest Manner of performing those Actions, which he speaks of? I am satisfied that your People should raise their Eyes, and lift up their Hands in a Manner as decent, reserved, and modest as they please: only let them do it. And if you do see it done, as you say, every Lord's Day in your own, and in all the Congregations of Dissenters with whom you have joined, 'tis so much the better, and I am glad of it. But I am persuaded, you would see it done a great deal more than you do, if you and your Brethren would not be afraid, or think it beneath you, to speak to your People, now and then, a little oftener than it is to be feared you do, from the Pulpit, concerning their outward Gestures, and recommend the external, as well as the internal and mental Worship. If instead of letting them go on in, and, perhaps, giving Countenance to those crude Notions and Sayings so common among them, that *the Heart is all*, and that *God, in the Worship of him, regards nothing but the Heart*, you would plainly tell them, that, tho' the *Heart* is to be *first* and *principally* minded, the *outward Deportment* is not to be neglected, and that a mere Composedness and Decency of Carriage, a simple Avoidance of all Carelessness and Levity is not sufficient, but that a Reverence of Behaviour is required, and cannot be dispensed with, in open and public Worship, and, therefore, that they ought either to kneel at Prayer, or at least, standing, to bow their Bodies, raise

^a See my Second Letter, p. 180. 4th Edit.

their

their Hands, or lift up their Eyes to Heaven, as the primitive Christians, when they stood, did; I say, Sir, if you would venture, or condescend to preach to them, once in a while, after this manner, you would certainly find in your Churches a great deal more, of that *Universal Solemnity* (if you mean by *That*, bodily Reverence) you wish for, and your People would not be so apt to take Offence, when any particular Person shall think proper to use, in the midst of you, that Gesture in Prayer, which is prescribed, and ordinarily practised in our Church. That many of them are apt to be offended at *This*, I am satisfied. And that some, in *that* Congregation I meant, were so, at least when the Occasion was first given, I had good Reason to say, and have no Doubt of its being true, whatever is pretended to the contrary. My former Adversary wanted me to name the Congregation, as you also seem to do; to Him I thought it enough to reply^a, that, *perhaps, I might do it, when he named the many Congregations of Dissenters where some Part of the Communicants received the Lord's Supper kneeling.* And to name it to you must surely be needless, if you know it already, as you would seem to do. Tho', if I do it not, it is, I assure you, for no other Reason, but because I don't think it for the Interest of the good Cause I am maintaining, that the public Attention should be diverted (as you may remember was done in a famous Dispute upwards of twenty Years ago) from the Merits of the Controversy, to a personal, insignificant, low, and odious Squabble.

From the external Forms proper to be used in the public Worship of the Lord's Day, you go on to the proper Manner of keeping that Day. And here, your Observation, or, to speak more proper-

^a Second Defence, Page 72.

ly, your Accusation of me is, that I publicly express, contrary to all Expectation from a Clergyman, my Dislike of the Way of observing it, among Dissenters. I had Occasion to mention incidentally ^a *an over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping the Lord's Day which many of you affect*; and then intimated my Opinion, that such a Way of keeping it was but *the Guise and Semblance of Holiness*, but no more a real Part of it, than those extraordinary Things which are preached up, and pretended to be practised, by Mr. *Whitefield* and his Associates, such as wholly abstaining from Things indifferent, as unlawful; renouncing the common Enjoyments of Life; irrational Liberalities to the Poor; and leaving our Stations in the World, to follow *Them*, can be esteemed such. And it is amazing to read the tragical Outcries you have taken Occasion from those Words (for they gave you none, as I shall presently make appear) to raise against me. You have thought yourself authorised thereby to represent me as *stigmatising the religious Observation of this Day, as Preciseness*: You suggest a Doubt, whether I do think *an absolute Contempt of that Day, and of all public and private Worship on it, a real Wickedness and Impiety, and whether Mens secular Accounts, Sleeping, Riding, Feasting, Carousing, Visiting, Cards, Assemblies, Routs, Riots, &c. is the proper Way of sanctifying, and the Method of observing it I would recommend to my Parish*. You speak of me as one likely to encourage my Parishioners rather to go to a Ring or an Alehouse, as soon as ever they come out of the Church, than to go Home, and think of what I had been preaching to them. This is the Picture you have been pleased to draw of me; and, I must think, with Design, to lessen the public Esteem of me, to expose me to the Indignation of Dis-

^a Page 110, 4th Edit.

senters,

senters, and of all serious Persons, that so all I have said may stand for nothing, and make no Impression. The Letter-Writer, before you, by a Slight of hand, by dropping a Word of mine, a pretty significant one, made me *injurious*, and a *Persecutor*: And you, by dropping a little of your Candour, have set me forth as irreligious and profane. I wonder what the next Gentleman who takes up his Pen against me (if any more shall think it worth while to do so) will make of me; perhaps, an arrant *Jacobite*, and disaffected to the Government: And, I think, he may even as well do *That*, as what either of you have done. And then, no Doubt but the Hearts of Dissenters, and of all true *Englishmen*, will be hardened, and set against me, and I may write on as long as I please, without being able to *hurt you*. Truly, Sir, a very easy and compendious Way to take off the Force of Arguments, when they cannot be *rationally confuted*.

I must, nevertheless, do you the Justice to own, that in the midst of these unfriendly Suggestions, you have thrown in one Question, which is reasonable and pertinent, *viz.* what I count *an over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping this Day*. I own the Question was very proper to be asked, if you was not before satisfied, what my Sentiments were upon that Head; only it came somewhat with the latest. It should have been the first Question put to me: And when you had received my Answer, that—truly *I count all Devotion performed on the Lord's Day an over-rigorous Superstition in itself*;—when I had answered you thus, it would have been Time enough to have made such a frightful Representation of me, as you have done. But to do it before you knew, or had any Grounds whereby to judge, *what I accounted an over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping it*, shews such a Proneness to think ill of those

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those who differ from you, as indeed, Sir, is not commendable. But, however, since I neglected to explain myself upon this Subject, time enough to prevent your rash and unkind Censure, I will explain myself *now* upon it, that I may, if possible, *make you sorry* for it.

My Sentiments are, that the religious Observation of this Day is absolutely necessary to preserve any tolerable Sense of Religion amongst us. I think the Canon by you quoted is a good Church of *England* Constitution, and has not the least Smack of that *over-much Rigidity and Preciseness* which I meant to censure, and wish my whole Parish and all Churchmen would strictly and religiously observe it. I have many a Time instructed and exhorted them to do so. And that the religious Duties of the Day may be secured, and such a sober godly Frame of Mind, as we are supposed to be put into by the Performance of them, may be preserved, I think it requisite, that all Sports, and Pastimes, and worldly Employments should then cease. Yet all this, methinks, I would have done without Affectation, or over-much Niceness, and Scrupulosity. The religious Exercises of the Day, whether public or private, I would have performed (for so they will appear most graceful and attracting) in a free, natural, simple, easy Way, without that Formality and Constraint which makes them look indeed as a *Duty*, but not as a *Pleasure*. Nor do I think that in the Point of Abstinence from Labour, and all Sorts of worldly Business, an excessive Scrupulosity, such as makes a Man uneasy to himself, and troublesome to all about him, ought, or need, to be encouraged. The Cards, and Assemblies; Routs, Riots, Rackets, and Carousings, which you mention, I detest, possibly, Sir, as much as you. Riding and Journeying I do not approve, especially, when be-

come an ordinary Practice, and neither Piety nor Charity can be pretended to call you, nor any great and pressing Necessity to drive you forth. Visiting I approve as little, when it grows to be (as I said before of Journeying) a common Practice, a Thing almost of Course, and is done in Form, and with Parade, as at other Times: Yet I should not scruple, neither I hope would you, upon Occasion, to eat Bread with a Friend or Neighbour, on the Lord's Day (as our Lord did with one of the chief Pharisees, *the straitest Seet of their Religion*, on the Sabbath Day, *Luke xiv. 1.*) where I could lead or govern the Conversation, or was morally certain none would arise that was not godly, or at least sober, such as the Canon requires, none that would dissipate the Thoughts, and unfit me for those holy Exercises that are to follow after; or are unsuitable to, and disagreeing with those that have gone before.— You see, Sir, I have been *now*, that I am called to it, very free in declaring myself upon this Argument. And tho' I have not, perhaps, hit upon, nor indeed have been solicitous *to prescribe*, as you wanted me to do, *the exact Medium between your Preciseness, and the Profaneness of others*, I hope I have furnished you with pretty clear Ideas of what I count *an over-rigorous and precise*, and what I esteem a *just, a rational and Christian* Way of observing this Day. And if the most eminent Divine, or greatest Churchman in *England*, even his Grace of *Canterbury* himself, should think fit to declare himself in the same Sentiments touching this Matter, you would not now, I hope, look upon it as any *reasonable Motive* to Non-conformity.—But lest you should take what I have now said, as, in effect, a Retraction of what I had said before, you shall plainly see they are perfectly consistent, and uniform, and that the Passage by you quoted did not

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not afford you the least Ground for those unkind Sentiments, or Suspicions of me, you seem to harbour, nor give you any Occasion for that extraordinary Commotion which it seems to have put you into.

Will you then be pleased to read and consider that Passage once again; and pray, Sir, take Notice it was *an over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping the Lord's Day* which was disapproved. Now the Disapprobation of an over-rigorous Way of keeping it does, to my Apprehension, plainly imply an Approbation of keeping it with some Kind of Rigour: And a Dislike of *Preciseness*, if it does not *necessarily suppose*, is fairly *consistent* with a Likening of some reasonable Degree of *Strictness*. Suppose I had been writing to the Papists, and had happened incidentally to declare my Opinion that the Way of Fasting practised by many in their Church was *over-rigorous and precise*, and, how highly soever they might think of themselves and their Sanctity on the account of it, was really *no Part of the Holiness of a Christian*, but only *the Guise and Semblance of it*; no reasonable Man, I believe, would from thence conclude, I was an Enemy to *all* Fasting, but rather judge I approved of it, when practised in a *sober and rational* Way. And in case any Romish Priest should fall foul upon me for *this*, should represent me as a Friend of Wine-bibbers, Epicures, and Gluttons, should *beg Leave to ask me*, whether faring deliciously, Surfeiting and Drunkenness was the *proper Way of sanctifying* a Christian Fast, and *the Method of observing it* I would recommend to my Parish; should desire me to be *so good as to inform them how it becomes a Minister of Christ to stigmatise religious Fasting, as Preciseness*, at a Time when there is *so universal and scandalous an Indulgence of all the Lusts of the Flesh*; and

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shou'd

should at last tell me, *He should not look upon it as any great Motive to turn Protestant, that this eminent Divine was willing to absolve them and their Families from those Restraints, which with Chearfulness they had laid themselves under, on those solemn Days, and to allow them in those sensual Liberties and Pleasures, which, from large and long Experience, they had often seen prove fatal to those who have indulged themselves in them; suppose (I say) any Priest of the Church of Rome should run riot upon me in this Manner, do you really think he would talk reasonably, and that I had given him Ground enough for some Charge and Imputation of this Sort, and had no Cause of Complaint against him? Or that, by such Words, I had stigmatised the Duty of religious Fasting, as an over-rigorous Superstition in itself, and thereby exposed the Religion of Protestants, and furnished the Roman-Catholics with a just and legitimate Prejudice against it?*

You may be pleased, Sir, farther to consider, that I was there speaking of the high-flown Doctrines and Practices of the Methodists, that, for Instance, of deserting their Stations, and neglecting the Duties of them to follow their Preachers in all their Ramblings. And as this was no Part of Christian Holiness, tho' it had some Shew and Semblance of it, so neither (I thought) could the Precisenesses and over-great Rigours in keeping the Lord's Day, by many of you affected, be reasonably esteemed such, whatever Appearance they had of it. What kind of Rigours and Precisenesses was it now reasonable to suppose I meant? Is it not highly improbable, and unreasonable to think (supposing me only not to be an Atheist) that I meant to put Meditation and Prayer, public and private, communicating at the Lord's Table, and other religious Duties of

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the Day, upon the same Footing with those Extravagancies and Follies, if not Sins, which I had mentioned, and are commonly charged upon the Methodists? Could you think, Sir, of no kind of Rigours and Precisenesses ever practised on the Lord's Day, of a more similar Nature and resembling Complexion with those Semblances of Holiness which your Methodists so much dazzle the Eyes of poor People with? What! never hear of any Rigours and Precisenesses observed on that Day *besides the being more abundant in the Exercise of religious Duties*? Did you never hear of any uncomfortable and ridiculous Restraints which some have laid themselves under, in the Point of Rest, and the Avoidance of all Affairs and Discourses of a worldly Nature, on the Lord's Day, so that they would not, for the World, do or speak of, or be spoken to, on that Day, about any earthly Matter whatsoever, let the Occasion be almost what it would, or the Matter ever so small, or the Time ever so short that would be sufficient for the doing, or saying of it? You have lived too much and long in the World not to be yet let into this Secret; but must, surely, have known, or have had credibly reported to you, many Precisenesses of this Kind, which, I dare say, you have too much Judgment to approve, and encourage. And how then could you avoid thinking, but that these, and not the bare *Exercise of religious Duties*, were the Rigours, the over-great Rigours and Precisenesses which fell under my Censure.

There is still, Sir, another Thing which might have led you to conclude, that I could mean no other than this Sort of *Rigours and Precisenesses*; and that is, that I did not charge them on the Body of Dissenters, as you all along represent me to do, but only speak of them as the Affectations of

particular Men, tho' indeed of *many* amongst you. I remember as perfectly as if it was but Yesterday, that the Word *many* did not come in by Chance, but was purposely inserted (and, lest you should not observe it, printed in *Italic*) that no Handle might be given you for saying of me, I was displeased at your People, for their general Strictness in keeping this Day in the Exercise of religious Duties, and the other proper Services thereof. No, Sir; I shall never be offended with such of you as keep it according to the *Genius*, the Spirit, and Economy of the Gospel; but the little Displeasure I have, is only at Those, whether of you or us, who fill their own, and other People's Heads with Jewish Fancies of the Sanctification of the Sabbath, who do themselves practise, and lash all others, in the severest and most malignant Manner, for not practising accordingly. I did not, it is true, happen to use any Words, in the Passage by you quoted, expressly limiting and determining my Meaning to Precisenesses of this Kind, which, I suppose, was occasioned by too great a Presumption and Security (too great, as I now find it) that every Body would easily understand me, and that no Mortal would ever suspect me, as you seem to do, of having any Intent to *stigmatise the religious Observation of this Day*, as a superstitious and precise Practice. But had you recollected another Passage, but a little before this, where I speak of the same Thing (and as those Sentiments struck you with such Surprise, it is a Wonder you did not, if you really did not, recollect it) and had you brought the two Passages together, you could not have doubted what Sort of *Rigours* were in my Thoughts, when I wrote the Passage by you cited. In that which you happened, or thought proper, to overlook, I speak of many or *most* of you as keeping the Day *in a severer Manner than*
many

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many of those who go to Church do, which Manner of keeping it I call *almost Judaical*. And if by this Passage you had been so candid as to interpret the other, it is likely, there would have been no Misunderstanding or Controversy between us. For you know very well, and all the World knows, what the Judaical Severities, in the Observation of their Sabbath, were; that they did not consist so much in *the Abundance of their Devotions*, as in an exact and precise Rest, an extreme Scrupulosity about the least Action or Motion of the Body, or doing, on the most pressing Occasions, the least Work or Business thereon, of a servile or worldly Nature. They would neither go, nor remove Things from one Place to another: They would neither tie, nor untie: They would not break two Threads: They would not sew two Stitches, or rip up, in order to the sewing them: Nor would they write two alphabetical Letters, or blot out, in order to the writing them: They would not kindle a Fire, or put it out. In such kind of Things the Sanctification of the Sabbath, according to the Traditions of the Elders, and the general Practice of the Jews, in the Times of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, chiefly consisted. And as there are many Christians, particularly amongst you, who seem to approach pretty near those Precisenesses in their Manner of sanctifying the Lord's Day, I did not think it would misbecome me, as a Christian Divine, to pass, as I went along, a gentle Censure and Animadversion upon them, and little expected to have found any, except it were a Scribe or a Pharisee, any Minister of the Gospel, zealous for *the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, that would have stigmatised me as a profane Person, on such an Account.

Whether the *religious* Observation of the Day may not be carried too far, exacted and practised

with such Rigour as is really condemnable, is a Question which I have not yet touched upon. And considering how things are with me, how ready you would be to charge me with Wickedness, if I should shew myself *willing to indulge you and your Families* in the least Abatement of the utmost Rigours that can be exacted and practised in the proper Duties and Services of the Day, it may not be thought a prudent thing in me to meddle with it. Nor should I, perhaps, have ventured to do it, if I had not found myself supported by some of your own Friends, under whose Protection I hope to be safe. Mr. Corbet, speaking of *Excess in the Quantity or Measure of religious Observances*, reckons this one, "too rigid a pressing of religious Exercises on the Lord's Day, or at any other time lawfully set apart thereunto, contrary to the Works of Charity, or present Necessity; yea, that Conveniency to Life and Converse, which does not divert the Mind from the things of God." This he thinks *not conducing to the End of Religion*, but rather a *Hindrance thereto*^a. And Dr. Owen was plainly in the same Sentiments^b. He censures some for *introducing the whole Practice required on the Mosaical Sabbath, into the Lord's Day*. And as, on the one hand, he condemns those who are *for accommodating God's Commands to the corrupt Courses and Ways of Men*, so, on the other hand, *he will not deny, but there are Mistakes in this Matter, leaning towards the other Extreme, Directions having been given, and that not by a few, for the Observation of a Day of holy Rest, which, either for the Matter of them, or the Manner prescribed, have had no sufficient Warrant or Foundation in the Scripture*. Some (he says) *have collected whatever they could think of that is*

^a Corbet's Remains, p. 209.

^b Exercitations concerning the Name, Original, &c. of a Day of Sacred Rest, p. 415, &c.

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good, pious, and useful in the Practice of Religion; and prescribe it all, in a Multitude of Instances, as necessary to the Sanctification of this Day; so that a Man can scarcely in six Days read over all the Duties that are proposed to be observed, on the seventh. And some, measuring others, it may be, by themselves, and their own Abilities, have been apt to tie them up to such long tiresome Duties, and rigid Abstinences from Refreshments, as have clogged their Minds, and turned the whole Service of the Day into a wearisome bodily Exercise, that profiteth little. And these rigorous Prescriptions, beyond the Constitution of human Nature to comply withal, he esteems a great Disadvantage to Religion. For Men, finding themselves no way able to come unto a Satisfaction, in Answer unto the severe Directions for Duties, and the Manner of their Performance, which by some are rigorously prescribed, have taken occasion to seek for Relief, by rejecting the whole Command; which, if duly interpreted in such a Condescension as they were capable of a Compliance with, they would have adhered unto. You see, Sir, neither of these Gentlemen have Sentiments upon this Head stricter than mine, if indeed quite so strict; and though I had meant, which I really did not, to censure the unreasonable Rigours and Precisenesses of any, about the religious Services of the Day, I should have been justified by two eminent Persons of your own Communion. 'Tis possible, there might be, in their Days, something more room for Censures of this Nature, than there is now. But we, I suppose, are not without so many Instances of those rigorous Prescriptions for the Sanctification of the Sabbath, and those culpable Excesses in the Practice of them, which these Gentlemen speak of, as make it requisite, at least excusable in any one, upon a proper Occasion, to put in a Caution against them.

For

For God's Sake, Sir, what Service can it be to Religion to press this, or any of its Duties, beyond Sense, Reason and Truth? Is that, do you think, the right way to bring Men off from their scandalous Neglect of this holy Day, to a sober and rational Observance of it? If, indeed, I were to make straight a crooked Stick, I would bend it, and keep it bent for some time, the contrary way; but if my Business was to bring a *Man* to rights, and reclaim him from any vicious Extreme he had run into, I would not attempt to persuade him it was absolutely necessary he should go as far into the contrary Extreme. I would no more preach up to a Man who had been always accustomed to spend the Lord's Day in Feasting, Cards, Assemblies, Routs, and Rackets, the absolute Necessity of the forementioned Rigours; would no more tell him, that neither Age, nor Pain, nor Sicknes, nor bad Ways, nor foul Weather should keep him, at any time, from Church, that no occurring Accident whatsoever should ever be suffered to interrupt and break in upon the accustomed Devotions, or Instructions of his Family, and that, if on the Lord's Day he should ever be contemplating or philosophizing, suppose in his Garden, upon the Works of Nature, which you, from *Philo*, recommend as a proper Employment on it, it would be a grievous Sin to pluck up a Weed which he should happen to espy, and was offensive to him: I would no more (I say) go about to reclaim him this way, than I would offer to reclaim a Drunkard, by telling him, that Wine was not made for Christians, and that the only Drink permitted to us is Water; or attempt to bring off from his wonted Indulgence, a Glutton, or an Epicure, by bearing him in hand, that *Jesus Christ* has prescribed to all his Followers the *Lessian* Diet, and that our holy Religion absolutely condemns every thing beyond.

And now I go on (as it is high time) to the Point
of

of Subscription, which your Title Page sets forth as the only Subject of your Book, and, particularly, the only one which you have any thing to say to me upon, tho' in your Book you have been pleased to say a good deal more upon other Heads, than you have done upon *that*. And here the first thing I meet with is, I confess, *somewhat extraordinary*. For you inform us, that "though many Dissenters do complain of the Power, that imposes Subscriptions to human Articles of Faith, as *groundless and unwarrantable*, and of the Imposition itself as a *Burthen* and Grievance, yet you never heard before that they esteemed a Submission to this Power, *in all Cases and Circumstances*, a most unwarrantable thing, or that any one amongst you, who really thought it unwarrantable to submit to the Imposition, ever did subscribe in Obedience to it ^a." How strangely have I, all this while, mistaken your Principles! I always thought, Sir, it was a received Principle amongst you, that *all* Submission to Impositions was unwarrantable, and that *bearing your Testimony* against them was your bounden Duty, and indeed that this was the very ground-work of your Separation. And this Notion, if I had not taken it up elsewhere, I might have been fairly led into by yourself. For do you not tell me, that "The dissenting Churches allow you to acquaint me, that you find not in the sacred Writings the least Intimation or Order for your submitting to any human Authority, or Impositions, in Matters of a religious Nature ^b?" And again, that "if the Cross in Baptism, and Kneeling at the Lord's Supper were left indifferent, there would be much less Objection against them both; but as *imposed* by human Authority, and actually made Terms of Communion, you think you are obliged as Chri-

^a Page 18.

^b Page 6.

"stians

“*stians to protest against them*?” I do indeed take Notice that you make a Reserve of some *Cases and Circumstances* wherein you esteem a Submission to an imposing Power not unwarrantable. I understand you, Sir, and plainly perceive this is done, only for making room to lay in an Excuse for your so readily submitting to the Imposition of that Subscription, without which you cannot have the Liberty to teach and preach in your separate Congregations. But then, you would have done well to have shewn us, *upon what Principle* you hold it warrantable to submit to *some*, but not to *other* Impositions, and, particularly, how you can patiently suffer Subscription, but not the Sign of the Cross, to be *imposed* upon you, and even *justify* your submitting to the *former*, at the same time you are so *loud* in your Condemnations of all Submission to the *latter*. Do you not constantly treat the Imposition of Subscriptions as one of the worst, and most infamous Impositions of the Church? Do you not represent it, p. 149. “as *peculiarly injurious* to the “Rights of Conscience, as an Encroachment on the “supreme Authority of *Christ*, as casting a high “Reflection on the Perfection of Scripture, as the “Exercise of a Power that generally has been, and, “in the Nature of the Thing, generally must be “destructive of the Peace of the Church, and of the “Purity both of the Christian Doctrine and Worship?” By your own Account then, the Imposition of Subscriptions is vastly more scandalous, bigger with Mischief, and draws after it a Train of more fatal Consequences, than the Imposition of the *Sign of the Cross*, or *Kneeling at the Lord’s Supper*. How then can you think of submitting to that Imposition, while you esteem it your Duty not to submit to these? As far as I can discern, an *open* Refusal to

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submit to *that*, as well as to *these*, is the only way you have to convince the World that you act in this Matter, upon any Principle.

Undoubtedly, you have your Motives for acting thus inconsistently, and *condemning yourselves in that Thing which you allow*; and the *preserving your Usefulness* is plainly your Motive to it. But it is, I think, a Motive you should not own; I am sure, it is not fit to be owned; for it is plainly *doing Evil, that Good may come*. And it was for this Reason *absolutely disowned* by one of your late *Presbyterian* Ministers in *Ireland*, who, when the People there, in many Places, were going about to separate from those of their Ministers who refused to subscribe the *Westminster* Confession, of whom he was esteemed one of the chief, has in his *Diary*, as the Prefacer to his Sermons assures us, these Reflections, among others, upon the State of their Affairs, at that Time, and his own particular Concernment in it: "The Pretence of preserving my Usefulness is really a Sham. Is that to be preserved at the Expence of Liberty and Truth? There is not any Thing I am more in Danger of, than the secret Influence of corrupt Motives, especially an undue Love of Reputation, Fear of Reproach, and the Disesteem of Men.—This puts on the Disguise of prudent Caution, and Care to preserve my Usefulness in the Ministry; but let me always remember, that my Usefulness and the Reputation necessary to it, is to be committed to God, and resigned to Him, *never to be preserved by any sinful Compliances on my Part*. Lord, let Integrity and Truth preserve me; for I wait on thee."

So long as you continue in your present Sentiments concerning the Mischief of Impositions, and the Iniquity of submitting to them, it would be,

* Mr. Abernethy.

Sir,

Sir, in my poor Opinion, a Part becoming the Simplicity of the Gospel, and the Character of a Minister of *Jesus Christ*, to enter into the Sentiments of this Gentleman, and to pursue a Conduct suitable thereto; that is, to refuse Subscription in *an open and publick Manner*, and, in Consequence of that, to quit your Stations, resign your public Ministry, and endeavour to make yourselves as useful as you can, in some other way. You would be much more useful than you now are, if, leaving off your public Ministrations, you would conform to the Church as Laymen (which you can do) and exhort all others to do the same, as the old Non-conformists, whom you are proud to call your Forefathers, did. You would then have Leisure, and might employ yourselves (such of you as are capable) in writing and publishing good Books, Defences of our common Christianity against the Infidel, or of Virtue and Piety against the Libertine Writers of the Age, or in furnishing the World with a greater Variety of Treatises, practical or devotional. And those of you who are not so well qualified for these Services, or less inclined to serve God in this way, might lay out their Time in visiting the Sick and Prisoners, composing Differences, exhorting, instructing, comforting, admonishing their Neighbours, from House to House, in a private and charitative way, and *praying them in Christ's Stead to be reconciled to God*. "This way of Parlour-preaching (as Dr. *Watts* himself has observed and acknowledged) has sometimes done more for *Christ* and Souls in the Space of a few Minutes, than the Labour of many Hours and Days in the usual Course of preaching from the Pulpit^a." You might be also, in my Opinion, very usefully employed in catechetical

^a *Humble Attempt*, p. 91.

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Instructions of the younger and more ignorant sort of Persons in the Places where you live, and the neighbouring Parishes; I don't mean, barely, in hearing them say the Church-Catechism, which might be deemed an Employment much beneath you, and, comparatively, of small Use; but in pertinent intermediate Questions, familiar Elucidations, set and formal Expositions of it, in a way somewhat like the *Catechetical Lectures* in those famous Schools of Antiquity at *Cæsarea*, *Alexandria*, and *Hierusalem*, where no less Persons than *Pantænus*, *Heraclas* and *Clemens*, *Dionysius* and *Cyril*, and the great *Origen* were the Catechists^a. Here you might shine, as well as in the Pulpit: Here, there would be Scope for the Display of your greatest Abilities; and indeed a real Occasion for, and Demand of them. By serving God and our Lord *Jesus Christ* in this way, and those beforementioned, your declared Resolutions of not forsaking the Ministry, if you *did* make any such at your Ordination, may be thought, it is hoped, sufficiently answered. And thus too you might soon put an End to that unnecessary Schism which has so long troubled us, and be, at the same Time, the happy Instruments of bringing to *Christ* many Souls, of spreading Christian Knowledge, of reviving practical Religion, and serious Godliness in the Nation. Then you might justly apply to yourselves what you have thought proper to apply to another Clergy, "Happy Clergy, thus to sacrifice all private Views of Dominion and Power to the nobler Interests of Christian Integrity and Peace^b!" And take no Care *what ye shall then*

^a You have, annexed to *Archdeacon Law's Considerations on the State of the World with Regard to the Theory of Religion*, Propositions and a Plan for such Catechetic Schools here in *England*, where also the great Use and Necessity of them in this Nation is largely set forth.

^b Page 177.

eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed. Integrity and Truth shall preserve you. Thus acting, you would be esteemed and beloved by serious Persons of all Denominations, who, doubtless, would chearfully contribute, and even tax themselves, for your Support and Maintenance. And if a public Provision was made for you, even equal to what you now receive from your Congregations, *during your Lives who are already in the Ministry*, or till such Time as you should see Reason to comply with the Terms of ministerial Conformity to the Church, I think you would deserve it. And as soon as the Church should see you acting after this manner, I doubt not but it would, of its own mere Motion, soften the Conditions of ministerial Conformity, in Favour of you, and open the Doors to its Ministry so wide, as that few of you would keep long out of it. This, methinks, would be no ill Expedient for *comprehending* you within the Pale of the Church; for hereby, one of the main Difficulties in the way of that Work would be removed, that of Re-ordination, for which, upon this Scheme, there will be no need. It is much better and safer, and vastly more practicable than yours, which seems to be the abolishing, hand over head, all Subscriptions, &c. and then standing to the Courtesy of your People (for, comprehending *you*, without *them* would be doing nothing) whether they would come in upon it, or not rather yet stand out, laughing at us, exulting, and triumphing in our Defeat, as they would call it, as if you had now, at last, by the Force of Truth and Reason, compelled us to give up some Things, though there were yet enow remaining, to keep them out of the Church. You have been, now a good while, exercising your Thoughts about the Methods tending to our common Union; I wish you would bestow a few of them

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them upon *this* which I have been now proposing to you.—But if, after all, you cannot be content with spreading Religion in this private way, and nothing will satisfy but *public* and *authoritative* Preaching, you know you may have it in *our* Church, with only going a little way farther in your Submission to Impositions, than you do already. You *now* submit to one Imposition, and, in your Judgments, the most iniquitous of all, to purchase the Liberty of serving God in separate Congregations; why then, Sir, can you not submit (you may do it with *as good a Conscience*, and, I am sure, with more Consistency and a *better Grace*) to two or three more confessedly less hurtful, and *so*, have the Liberty of serving him in the Established Church, where you might be *indeed* useful, provided you came in with pure Intentions, and brought no Principles with you tending to destroy it.

But to leave this Digression, if it be a Digression, and to come somewhat nearer the Case of Subscription. You take upon you, Page 19. to re-state the Question concerning it, pretending I had not fairly and truly stated it. But, surely, you have re-stated it *so*, as no Case was ever before re-stated. For instead of a short, a plain, and simple State of the Question, such as both Parties may agree is the precise Point in Controversy between them (which is the only right way of stating Questions and Cases, that I know of) you have given us a tiresome State of it, taking up pretty near a whole Page, and have crowded into it all the Inconveniences, Hardships, untoward Consequences, and Absurdities which you *suppose*, but we *absolutely deny*, do attend that Side of the Question I am defending. This you may call, if you please, debating the Question, but I desire you would not call it, stating of it.

D

Your

Your first Chapter I have no Concern in, it being wholly levelled against the other Gentleman you have to do with, the Vindicator of the Church of *England*, who, I see, is of Age, and able to answer for himself. But, in the second Chapter, you fall in with me; and here, you begin again to restate the Question much as you did before, afterwards adding ^a — “ Methinks, upon the first View
 “ of this Question, it must appear an extremely
 “ wonderful Thing, if God’s most holy and in-
 “ fallible Word should give the Governors of the
 “ Church any Warrant to set its own-self aside,
 “ and put themselves, and their own Articles in the
 “ Room of it.” And a little below, “ that it
 “ should authorize any Persons to impose Subscrip-
 “ tion to human Creeds, as a better Test of Sound-
 “ ness in its own peculiar Doctrines, than itself;
 “ or give them a Power to form Articles of Faith,
 “ other than what the Word of God contains.”

From this Representation of the Question, an unlearned Reader will be apt to conclude, that the Church of *England*, in framing her Articles, and requiring Subscription to them, had quite set aside the Scripture, and set up those Articles in open Rivalship and Opposition to it, and (which I must needs confess would be, as you say, *wonderful*, and ridiculous enough) pleaded the Authority of Scripture itself for its so doing. For what other could he suppose you meant by what you call *human Creeds*, than certain Formula’s containing Doctrines of Man’s devising, wrought purely out of his own Brain, without any regard to Scripture? and what, by the Church’s *setting up these Creeds, as a better Test of Soundness in the peculiar Doctrines of the Scripture*, but its preferring these Forms, as *certainly* containing the genuine Doctrine of Christianity, while it

^a Page 29, 30.

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is not so *certain* that the holy Scriptures do so? and what again, by its pretending to form *Articles of Faith other than what the Word of God contains*, but its assuming to itself a Right to *make* Articles of Faith, *besides* those which we find in Scripture, and which have not the least Foundation there? Can you say, Sir, this is not the plain meaning of your Words? And yet the Truth of the Matter is no more than this: The Church, desirous that all its Members may be instructed in the true Doctrine of the Scriptures, and no other, has *extracted from thence* a certain System of Truths, which she esteems either very important in themselves, or else necessary in regard to the Times, and has drawn them up with great Care and Caution in Forms as little liable as possible to be perverted, or differently understood. These, she verily believes, perfectly agree with the true Sense and Meaning of the Scripture, and therefore, thinks it right to require those who would be received into her Ministry, and desire to enjoy the Emoluments thereof, to assent and subscribe to them, as a Test or Means to discover whether they really are, as they pretend to be, in those Sentiments which she believes conformable to the Word of God, and would *have* inculcated upon the People, leaving those who are in other Sentiments to dispose of themselves as they think fit, to enter, if they are so minded, into the Ministry of some other Church which they like better, and to receive there such Benefits and public Salaries as that Society has annexed to the Office, or as many voluntary Contributions as they can get. And what is there, Sir, in all this, that is so mighty culpable? Would you have Intrants into the Ministry not be brought under any Engagements whatsoever? You are willing, I perceive, they should be obliged to subscribe the Scriptures; and that surely is some Abridg-

ment of their Liberty, how little Security soever it may afford you of their Orthodoxy. Would you desire of them no other Evidence or Discovery of their Principles, than this will give you? Excuse me, Sir, I can scarcely believe it. You do indeed say, p. 39. "The Scriptures I receive as a Divine Revelation.—By these, and no other, will I ever
 " *σπονδῶν*, examine those who apply to me; to receive my Assistance, in recommending them to God for the Work of the Ministry. All who receive these, as the Rule of their Faith, and live by them, as the Rule of their Morals—I will, if other Qualifications are not wanting, willingly receive into the Ministry.—And this I declare without Exception of any Denomination, or Party of Christians, whatsoever."—It is a noble and generous Resolution, I must needs say, and shews you are no Bigot. But are you really in earnest? Or do you verily think you could keep to this Resolution, if you were to be tried, in a few Instances? Lay then your Hand upon your Heart, and plainly tell me, if (supposing *me* a Layman, and you had no Objection to me, in Point of Learning or Morals) you should like to lay it on my Head, to ordain me, with all my present Principles, your Successor in your Meeting, in case you were disposed to resign it, and I to receive from you that Honour? Would you consent to fill the Presbyterian Churches, there in *London*, with public Teachers of every Sect and Denomination in Christendom, which owns the Scripture to be the Rule of their Faith, and would subscribe to it? Would you lend your Assistance to ordain a *Lutheran* for one of your Meetings, a *Calvinist* for another, for a third an *Antinomian*, *Moravian*, or *Methodist*, for a fourth a *Pelagian*, an *Arian* for a fifth, for a sixth a *Copte*, *Armenian*, or *Jacobite*, and a *Papist* for a seventh,

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seventh, provided only he would declare the holy Scriptures were the Rule of his Faith, tho', at the same Time, he should also openly declare, he thought all the Doctrines and Practices of Popery really were, as, you know, most of them are pretended to be, found there? Is this the Situation to which you would reduce the Churches? I confess, you do intimate it would be proper to ask them these Questions, or the like; "^a Do you believe, " *there is one God, and one Mediator between God* " *and Man, the Man Christ Jesus? That he gave* " *himself a Ransom for all? That it is a faithful* " *Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ* " (you should have said *Christ Jesus*; for by dropping that Word, you have made it a Form of " Man's devising) *that he came into the World to* " *save Sinners? That he is the Saviour of all Men;* " *but especially of them that believe? That he has* " *abolished Death, and brought Life and Immorta-* " *lity to Light through the Gospel?"* And you think that the examining of them by such Questions would give all the Satisfaction that could be reasonably demanded. If it would satisfy you, you are soon satisfied. It would be, perchance, as you say, " a " sufficient Test whether they were *Jews or Chri-* " *stians;*" but it would not discover *what Sort* of Christians they were. It might be also some Test " *whether they would, or rather were likely to preach* " *the Gospel of Christ,*" that is, something or other concerning *Christ*, " or some other Doctrine," that of *Moses*, or *Mahomet*, for Instance; but *what Sort of Gospel* it would be, such Questions, with their bare Answers, Yes, or No, would never, with any Probability, discover. Some of those Texts (you know) are opposed to the *Socinian* Doctrine, and are thought by you (I suppose) and by me, to

^a Page 44.

overthrow it; but a *Socinian* is not to be so detected. There is not one such, as you have Reason to believe, upon the Face of God's Earth, who would not answer affirmatively to such Questions, and twenty Times as many, that should be asked him, in the precise Words and Phrases of Scripture; not one, who would not declare, in as solemn a Manner as you please, and subscribe to it, if you desire it, that he firmly believes *Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners, and to give himself a Ransom for all Men*. But if you should put him upon explaining himself, and bid him tell you, what Ideas he has of, and what he means by the Words *Save* and *Ransom*, (which you must do, before his Sentiments can be known) do you not plainly see, this is putting him upon making a *Confession of his Faith in Words of human Invention and Composition*? And might not you as well require him to subscribe an Article of the Church of *England*, or any Question and Answer in the Assembly's Catechism?

You seem to speak, as if an Article of Faith, when delivered in any other Phrase than that of Scripture, becomes thereby an Article *other than what the Word of God contains*; as if there was, in the whole Compass of Language, only one Set of Phrases wherein any Scripture Doctrine *can* be truly expressed, *that* only wherein it is expressed in Scripture, or, as if the Words and Phrases of Scripture, not the inward Sense and Meaning, were the Doctrine of Scripture. If it be such a *perilous* Attempt to express any Christian Truth, and to deliver it out in other Forms of Expression than those which we find in the sacred Writings, I wonder you are not afraid to preach, upon any Article of Faith and Religion, or any Point of Christian Morality, to your Congregation, in any other Way than by collecting and digesting, under proper Heads, some

Texts

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Texts of the *Bible*, and then leaving them, without the least Exposition or Descant of your own, to their private Meditations. I think, Sir, you have published a short *Catechism*, and in that have given a human Explication of a human Creed, I mean, have expounded the Apostles Creed, as it is commonly called, in Words of your own devising. I marvel how you came to do it, and could be so forgetful of your own Principles, as thus to *impose* upon the Belief of Babes, who receive implicitly all you say, such a Heap of *Human Articles of Faith*, other than what the Word of God contains. Nor can I account to myself how, upon your Principles, you can venture, if you ever do, to read to your Congregation a Chapter in the *Bible*, of the *English* Translation, or in any Language besides the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Originals, especially under the Notion of its being not the Word of Man, but the Word of God. For you know, Sir, the Words of our, or any other Translation are not the Words of the *Holy Ghost*, and that our Translators were as fallible, as our Creed-makers. It may be, you will say, you do not subscribe to the *English* Translation of the *Bible* which you read, or to the Sermons you preach to your Congregation, nor yet to the Doctrines wherein you instruct your little Catechumens, as the Doctrines of *Jesus Christ*, and his Apostles. That is true; tho', it is to be hoped, you would not scruple to subscribe either your Sermons, or your Catechism, or an *English* Translation of the *Bible*. But if you do *not* subscribe them, you may as well do *That*, as what you do do. For it is every way as lawful, warrantable, and safe, to declare, and put your Hand to it, that you believe, if you do believe, any Form of Words, prepared for you, to contain a Doctrine agreeable to Scripture, as it is to instruct a Number of Youth, or, in a public

authoritative Way, a Congregation, assembled together to hear the Word of God from your Mouth, in the same Form of Words, or in any other of your own devising, and to assure them that the Doctrine by you delivered is the genuine Doctrine of the holy Scriptures^a. Suppose, Sir, you was preaching upon the Subject of any one of our Articles, the ninth, for Example, concerning Original Sin, and should quote the Words of that Article: Would you make any Scruple immediately to add — *This I verily believe is the Doctrine concerning Original or Birth Sin, which the holy Scriptures hold forth to us, and heartily subscribe to it?* And if you would not scruple to say this in the Face of a worshipping Assembly, sitting before you to be instructed in the Doctrine of *Christ*, you must be very whimsical to raise any Difficulty, or to think it any Grievance, to make, in Writing, (which with every honest Man goes no farther than his Word) a Declaration of the same Thing, at the Quarter Sessions.


But, I suppose, the great Burthen and Grievance is that Subscription is required under a *Penalty*, as you are pleased to call it: That is, the Advantages and Emoluments of the Church are not to be had without it, and that after a Man, by Subscription, has entitl'd himself to, and got Possession of them, he is liable to be turned out, if he afterwards ap-

^a Thus in your Catechism, pag. 3. you assure your Catechumens, that the Creed called the Apostles *is a Summary of the Christian Faith, and agreeable to the pure Doctrine of the Apostles*. This is tantamount to subscribing it. Nay, having set your Name to your Catechism, you may truly be said to have subscribed this, and every other Proposition contained in it. For when you subscribe the Articles, what do you more than you have done here, *i. e.* declare your Belief that those Articles are true, and agreeable to the Doctrine of the Apostles, or the holy Scriptures, and set your Name to it? Is not this now a mighty Matter to make such a Stir about?

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appears to have forsaken the Sentiments he had before embraced, and made Profession of, and takes a little Liberty *openly* and *publicly* to contradict them. I find you esteem this a great Hardship, and I suppose also a Persecution; and you may call it so, as well as many other Things you do. You should have my Leave to call it a Hardship, or even a Persecution, if you were to be *forced* into the Service of the Church, and *compelled* to subscribe its Articles, under the Penalty of being kept out of your Patrimonies, losing Houses or Lands, or any other Thing to which you had a natural or legal Right. But your being refused to be admitted to the Patrimony of the Church, or being deprived of it, because either you never would embrace the Sentiments of the Church, or have forsaken them, you may call any thing you can think of, almost as properly as a *Penalty*. It is from the Knowledge the Church has, by Means of Subscription, of the religious Sentiments of those who aspire to its Offices or Preferments, and the Presumption, from thence arising, that they will imbue the People committed to their Care with the same, that induces the Church to bestow its Emoluments upon them; and they accept its Emoluments upon these Terms. This is the Bargain. But if the Bargain is broken on their Parts, and the Church deprived of those *wholesome* Instructions which it stipulated for, and poisonous Doctrines are infused in the room of them, neither Reason nor Equity will permit that she should be held to her Engagements; nor can they, with any Modesty, pretend to hold its Preferments any longer, than they are willing to promote those Services for which they were given them.

Pray, tell me, Sir, is not the Case pretty much the same in your own Churches? Are your Subscriptions to be come at any other way than by giving



ing some Proof and Satisfaction that you *have* embraced the religious Sentiments, and *will* observe the Ways of the Congregation which they rise from? And if any one of you shall renounce the *discriminating* Doctrines, or the *peculiar* Practices of the Sect which the Congregation professes to adhere to, will they continue their Contributions any longer? How many Instances have we had, within the last twenty or thirty Years, of Ministers, who have been dismissed, or, in your harsh Language, *bid to depart into Beggary and Fails*^a, on such Accounts! And do you esteem this an unreasonable Proceeding? Do you call it Persecution? Yes, perhaps the Gentleman who suffers, his Relations, and a few more of his particular Friends and Partisans, who know little of, and less regard, the *Peculiarities* of any of your Sects, but think all your Churches very good Churches, so long as they dissent from the Established: These, in all likelihood, will call it so. But I suppose all others hold it a just and reasonable Proceeding, and a necessary Means to preserve the Purity of your Churches.

I hope it will now be thought I have fairly removed the Difficulties and Inconveniences with which you affect to embarrass the Question; and proceed to the Question itself. It is, or should be simply this, Whether Subscription to explanatory Articles of Faith (suppose the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of *England*) as a Qualification, or, more properly speaking, as a Proof or Evidence of any one's Qualification for Admission into the Christian Ministry, be justifiable. You think it is *not*, unless it can be justified by Scripture, which, you are of Opinion, it cannot be. I am of another Opinion, that it may be justified from thence, if it really wanted, as it does not, that sort of Justification. It is suffi-

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ciently warranted by the Nature and Necessity of the Thing. In your own Churches, I am sure, there are some Things, in the very Affair of Ordination, which you observe to do, without pretending any Scripture-Direction for, and only, because the plain Reason and Nature of the Things seem to require them. I will name you one : It is the Examination and Probation of the Candidates in point of Learning, and the Manner wherein that Examination is performed. Can you shew me, Sir, any Canon of *Christ*, or his Apostles, directing you to put them to that Test, and to manage it just in the Manner you do, by trying (suppose) their Skill in the original Languages of the *Bible*, and their Knowledge in the several Parts of Theology, either by Interrogatories put to them, or by ordering them to fit down, and to draw up in Writing their Sense of any given Subject. Do you remember, Sir, any Text bidding you examine them either of these Ways, for the Trial of their Learning and Erudition, or indeed examine them at all ? No ; but you do it, because it is requisite, *in the Nature of the Thing*, that Teachers should have Knowledge, and that those who constitute them such should receive proper Satisfaction, from some Trial and Examination of them, that they have the Knowledge that is requisite ; and the particular Form of this Examination, I dare say, you think ought to be left to your own Prudence and Discretion. Now I don't see but the Trial of their Orthodoxy will stand upon the same footing. That Teachers should be sound and uncorrupt in their Doctrine is, at least, as necessary as that they should have Knowledge, Ability, and Sufficiency to teach it. And from thence it will follow, that those who are to constitute and ordain them Teachers should be satisfied, upon the Evidence of some kind of Test, that they are sound
and

and uncorrupt in it. But what that Test shall be, whether assenting and subscribing to the Truth of the Words of Scripture, or of certain Formularies, as being agreeable thereto, may as well be left to human Prudence and Discretion, as what Test of the Learning and Theological Knowledge they shall be put to. And I much question, if any Protestant Church has ever used its Power to impose Tests of Orthodoxy so ill, as some *Triers* amongst us of the Grace, Knowledge, and Utterance of Ministers are well known to have used those unlimited Powers they were intrusted with.

Notwithstanding I speak, Sir, after this Manner, I would not have you think, and I must desire you not to tell your Friend to whom you address your Book, now again as you did before^a; “that he should see me honestly confessing I had no Scripture Warrant for my Doctrine of Subscription.” For though I may be said to have *honestly confessed* (by Implication) I had no *Scripture-Precept* for Subscription to human Formularies agreeable to Scripture (and I hope you will as *honestly confess* you have none for Subscription to all the Canonical Books that then were, or should afterwards be written) yet I never said, I had no Scripture *Warrant* for it; for a Scripture *Precept*, and Scripture *Warrant* are, as I take it, very different Things; and any Practice may properly *be*, and *is* often said, both by you and us, to have the *Warrant* and Authority of Scripture, if it either flows by a just and rational Deduction from some Scripture Principle, or is evidently contained in some general Precept, or if it appears from thence to have been an approved Observance in the Church of God, though the Scripture has not given, in so many Words, any express Order, or formal Direction for it. I could name

^a Page 57.

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you many such, but shall put you in mind of only one, whereof you yourself have *honestly confessed* as much. "You hope, you say, the numerous Examples of Standing at Prayer, brought by the dissenting Gentleman from the holy Scriptures, will justify you," *i. e.* will be your *Warrant* for using the same Posture, without ever pretending you have any Injunction, or Precept for it.

If the holy Scriptures do injoin some Trial and Probation of the Faith and Principles of those who offer themselves for the Ministry, though without determining the precise Manner wherein this Trial and Probation shall be made, we cannot say it is destitute of all Scripture Warrant and Authority. But what we must say is, that the *Thing* is warranted, and something more than warranted by Scripture, and the *Manner* only left to the Prudence of Church Governors, to be determined by them, as the State of Religion, the Rise and Growth of Heresies, the Principles of Persons, and other Circumstances shall direct. This was my Reasoning in the *Appendix* you undertake to Answer. But as you have been pleased to misrepresent and disguise it in such an extraordinary and surprising Manner as one shall scarcely meet with in any other controversial Writing, I will here transcribe the whole Passage, and place it once more before your Eyes, that you may re-consider it, and your Manner of treating it. My Words are :

Sometimes we are asked, What Directions there are in Scripture concerning Ministers subscribing Articles of Faith, and what Warrant and Authority we have there for such a Practice. Why, the Scriptures require Ministers to take heed to their Doctrine, to shew Uncorruptness in it, and to hold the Mystery of Faith in a good Conscience; and that the Church may have some Assurance of their doing

doing so, ordain that they be first proved, and then admitted to their Office being found blameless, 1 Tim. iii. 10. where the Apostle plainly intimates, and even enjoins some Trial and Probation of those who are to be advanced to the Ministry, as well in reference to their holding the Mystery of Faith, as to their keeping a good Conscience. But the Form and Method of Probation not being determined, that is evidently left to the Determinations of human Prudence, and the Discretion of Church Governours. And then, the Subscription Way, I guess, may be as prudently taken as any other. This is what I say, and all I say, upon the Head. And is there not common Sense in it? Is there any thing deserving that Contempt, that Flood of Ridicule which you have poured upon it?

“ I first mention (you say) some Texts of a general Nature, and tell you, the Scriptures require Ministers to take heed to their Doctrine, to shew Uncorruptness in it, and to hold the Mystery of Faith in a good Conscience”.^a So far you are right. But what mean, Sir, those *Ergo*'s and Inferences that follow? Would you put them off for mine? You plainly intend it; yet I am so far from making such Inferences from the three Passages of Scripture there quoted, that I make none at all, and only take them for my Ground, a proper Basis and Foundation for the Argument that follows to rest upon, as you will plainly see, if you will but be pleased to cast your Eyes once more upon the Passage I have placed before you.

“ Timothy, according to St. Paul's Exhortation, and other Ministers of the Gospel are to take heed to their Doctrine:” *Ergo* (cry you, and would have your Reader believe it is my Inference) “ Church Governors are to take care of Timothy, and

^a Page 33.

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"his Doctrine for him." I agree with you, this is no Consequence ; but at the same Time, I affirm, it is no Inconsistency. A Minister of the Gospel may be very properly admonished to take heed to his Doctrine, and a superior Pastor may have a Right to look after it too, and to see that it be uncorrupt ; unless you will say, that when we send our Sons to the University or Academy, and bid them take heed of their Behaviour there, we thereby discharge the Tutors and Governors from having any Care and Concern about it.

In like Manner you say, I tell you, that *the Scriptures require Ministers to shew Incorruptness in their Doctrine*. And presently you add—*Now for Mr. White's Inferences* *. And then comes another of your *Ergo's*, which you would have understood to be mine. Neither content with representing me as reasoning, in this foolish and absurd Manner, upon those Scriptures which I do indeed mention, but without reasoning at all upon, you take a Liberty to produce three other Scriptures, though I never mention them, tacking an *Ergo* also (plainly intended, as well as the former, to pass for mine) to each of them, and then close all with these Expressions of sovereign Contempt :—" *The Force of such Demonstration who can resist !*" — You thought yourself, doubtless, extremely witty in *cooking up* for me *this Heap of nonsensical Reasoning* ; but you had been *wiser* to have let your *Cookery* alone, having burnt your own Fingers by it. The ridiculous Representation you have given of my Manner of arguing is carried so far, and work'd up so high ; that it must raise, in every sensible Reader, a Suspicion of unfair Dealing, and excite in him a Curiosity to see with his own Eyes whether he was to admire my *Logic* or the *Honesty* and *Ingenuity* of my Adversary.

Look, Sir, look once again, I entreat you, upon the Passage which you make such a mighty ado with, and you will find I draw no Inferences, nor use any Reasonings at all, but only upon the single Text of 1 Tim. iii. 10. *And let these also first be proved, and then let them use the Office of a Deacon, being found blameless.* And I am not convinced by all you have said, either to me or to the Vindicator (for it happens, that we reason upon it in the same Manner) that our Reasoning is not right. You think that the Examination here spoken of relates to their *Morals*, and not their *Faith*^a. Surely, Sir, to both. For the Examination was to be, whether they held *the Mystery of the Faith*, that is, as you yourself explain it, *Christian Principles, with a good Conscience.* And how was this Trial to be made? You say, “*by the unanimous Testimony of the whole Church or Congregation in their Favour,*” which is, doubtless, a good Way to discover, if their Lives have been blameless, but, surely, a very improper and uncertain Way to come at the Knowledge of their Faith and Principles. Ουτοι δε (says the Apostle) δοκιμαζεσθωσαν πρώτον, εἰς διακονεῖσιν, ἀνεγκλητοι οἶτες. The Word δοκιμαζεσθωσαν plainly intimates a formal Trial and Probation, such as that of Gold by the Touch-stone. And so our Translators understood it, as is plain by their rendring it *proved*, and not *approved* or *allowed* of. But if no such thing had been intimated by that Expression, the whole Verse is a formal Injunction of it. Their Faith or religious Principles were to be first examined, their Lives canvassed; this being done, and ending to Satisfaction, they were to be put into their Office.

The Question now will be, In what Form and Manner this Trial was to be made. But *this* the

^a Page 47.

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ptures, for all you are so confident, have no where determined. They don't tell us, whether it shall be by subscribing the entire Volume of the *Bible* in the original Languages, or a fallible Translation of it, antient or modern, or a Creed purely scriptural, or whether it shall be by answering Interrogatories in the Words of Scripture, such as those by you proposed and taken Notice of above, or whether by signing a Confession of Faith, drawn up in our own Words, and delivering it in to the Ordainers, or pronouncing it openly before the Congregation, as the general Way amongst you is; or, as we do, by subscribing a well-known Form, prepared by the Church for that Purpose. My New Testament, I own, tells me nothing of all this^a. If your's has in it any Text, expressly determining which of these Ways the Pastors and Governors of the Church are to take, in order to discover the Faith and religious Opinions of the Candidates, you had done well to have pointed it out to me, and my Fellow-Labourer, as it pleases you to call him, whom *you are sorry* (you say) to find *so ill acquainted with our Bibles*, as not to know it. You may say, and repeat it too, as you do, twenty times over, or as much oftener as you please, that *the Rule of Trial is unalterably fixed*^b, and that *the one only authorized Test of Soundness in the Faith are the sound Words of Christ*^c, and all the while say nothing. For that is not the Point in Question, though you affect to make it appear so. But the Point is, whether the Scriptures have said, which of the Ways beforementioned is the most rational, and likely to be the most effectual, in all Cases and Circumstances, to discover the Soundness of Mens Sentiments in the Faith of *Christ*, and, whether the Holy Ghost has explicitly and precisely determined which of them

^a Page 61.

^b Page 77.

^c Page 65.

the Pastors and Governors of the Church shall make use of, to that End. Will you presume to say, he has: Pray, tell me where?

You seem to have taken it, I know not how, into your Head, that the subscribing Articles of Faith and Religion, conceived in other than the precise Words of God, is setting aside the Word of God, as the Rule of Faith, and substituting another Rule instead of it. Not, Sir, I hope, when the Word of God is expressly mentioned and pointed at, as the Rule of Faith, in the very Form of Subscription, which with us is the Case, as the 36th Canon, if you turn to it, will plainly shew you. When you and I subscribed the Articles of the Church of *England* (for I suppose you have subscribed them, and beg your Pardon for the Wrong done you, if you have not) did not we subscribe them, not simply as Verities, but as Verities *agreeable to the Word of God*, and by so doing, plainly recognized the Word of God, as the Rule of our Faith, and the supreme Test of Orthodoxy^a? How then could you say, as

^a When you make a Confession of your Faith at your Ordinations, you do not *ordinarily* recognize the Word of God as the Rule of your Faith, in so particular and express a Manner as we do, in our Subscription to the Articles, on the like Occasion. We acknowledge, in Terms, that *all and every the Articles contained in that Book are agreeable to the Word of God*, while you often, if not commonly, content yourselves with only saying, *This I believe*, and *I believe that*, and, perhaps, in the Close, *All this I believe*, without telling us, whether you believe it, as agreeable to God's Word, or whether upon the Authority of the Tradition of the Church, or the Evidence of your own Reasonings on the Matter. Yet, it being well known, that you, as well as we, do avow the Word of God to be the Rule of your Faith, though, on this Occasion, you do not mention it as such, nor say (as we do with respect to the Articles) that you believe your Confession, and every Part of it to be agreeable thereto, I should think it a very unfair and disingenuous thing to charge you with setting aside the Scripture as the Rule of Faith, and setting up your own Confessions, or any thing else in the room of it.

you

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you do, "that though they who drew up Creeds, "and form Articles of Faith, agreeing, in the best "of their Judgments, with the Doctrine of Scri- "pture, may be said indeed to make the Scripture "the Rule of *their own* Faith, yet when they make "the Belief of these their Articles and Creeds ne- "cessary to the Admission of others into the Com- "munion or Ministry of the Church,—they plainly "lay aside the infallible Rule of Scripture, as the "Rule of Judgment, and exclude it as a proper and "sufficient Test of Soundness in the Faith, and, in "Fact, declare their own fallible Interpretation of it "to be a better and surer Test^a." How could you, Sir, allow yourself to throw out such a Sug- gestion as this, when you plainly see there is as great a Regard to the holy Scriptures, as the Rule of Faith, and Standard of Orthodoxy, in *subscribing* the Articles, as you suppose there to have been, in the *compiling* of them?

Well then, we have seen that though the Word of God does, in general, direct some Trial and Exa- mination of those who would be assumed into the Ministry, as to the Soundness of their Faith, it has given no Orders that are special and precise con- cerning the Way of doing it. In this Case, what is to be done? Is *nothing* to be done, because we are not particularly told *what*? Is it thus, do you think, God meant the general Directions he has given us in Scripture should be observed? Is it not far more rational to conclude, he meant to leave the Governors of his Church to determine that Mat- ter, according to the Reason and Nature of the Thing, and to pitch upon this or that Method, as Times and Circumstances shall require, as Heresies are few or more numerous, or as the Honesty and Simplicity, or the cunning Craftiness of Men makes

^a Page 32.

it proportionably more or less difficult to discover their Sentiments. And whatever Way they shall esteem most expedient, and accordingly resolve upon, may be as properly said to have the Warrant of Scripture, as an Order of Council, which his Majesty shall be, by an Act of Parliament, enabled to make, on certain particular Occasions and Emergencies, can be said to be warranted and authorized by the Laws of the Land.

I think I have now given every thing material, which you have advanced against me, due Consideration. For I conceive not myself concerned in your long Chapter of Collections from the Antients, in order to shew, that Subscription was not the Practice of the Primitive Church, having never touched upon that Head: Nor yet in your following Chapter concerning the Practice of foreign Protestants, since you have expressly, or by Implication, granted the Points contended for, unless, perchance, we must say, that to my general Assertion, that *all the Protestant Churches beyond the Seas prove the Faith of their Candidates for the Ministry, by Subscriptions, or Oaths, or both^a*, you make an Exception of a few Towns in *Switzerland*, which do not now (you say) require any Subscription. You make a mighty Flourish both in your Title-Page and Book, with *the excellent Speech of the Reverend and learned John Alphonso Turretine to the Lesser Council at Geneva, previous to the abolishing the Subscription to the Formula Consensus there, which, in your Opinion, holds up to the Established Church, and to all the several Denominations of Protestants amongst us, a Model worthy the copying after.* A better Model, I confess, than your *Case of Subscription: This*, I dare say, you might have held up as long as you had pleased, before the Protestant Churches, or Mr. Turretine

^a Page 261. Fourth Edition,

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himself, would have copied after it. For he plainly appears, in this very Speech, to have been in Sentiments very different from yours. You are for abolishing all Subscription even to necessary Articles of Faith; but the Rector of the Academy of Geneva excuses the Resolution of their Society to abolish Subscription to their *Formula Consensus*, by alledging the No-Importance of the Matters contained in it. In almost every Page, he is inculcating *this* upon his Audience, and putting them in mind, that all Sides have avowed them to be *Questions of an indifferent Nature, and no ways essential to Salvation*; and declares, that “if they had thought these were among the essential Things, they could not have approved, that every one should be permitted to embrace what Sentiments in Reference to them he pleased^a.” He also justifies their Resolution upon account of the extreme Difficulty and Obscurity of those Points, “many of them such (he says) as are absolutely impossible to be decided”; and yet, after all, is willing, “for the Sake of Peace and Union amongst themselves, as well as Uniformity in the Manner of their Instruction, that the Doctrine of the *Consensus* shall be the only one that is taught, and that they who are of contrary Sentiments shall not be allowed to teach them.” And let me farther observe, he was so far from pressing, as you do, the laying aside all Tests of Orthodoxy, that he takes Notice, more than once, of a Confession of Faith they had, and were obliged by *Promise* to conform to. And I hope you will allow a *verbal Promise*, on so solemn an Occasion as being received into the Ministry, and as a Condition requisite thereto, to be as strong a Tie upon an honest Man, and as real an Abridgment of his Liberty, as an

^a Page 160, 161. 163, 164, &c.

Assurance

Assurance under his Hand-writing. When you had this Model lying before you, which you esteem so excellent a one, and so earnestly recommend to all Protestants, you should, methinks, your self, have copied after it. And had you done so, had you been content with inculcating the same moderate Sentiments he does, you might, perchance, have been listened to.

And, methinks, Sir, it would have been right too, to have given your Reader the *History* and *Contents* of this same *Consensus*, explained the Motives for laying aside Subscription to it, and shewn how it became necessary, as the Orator suggests, for the Peace of the Church and Academy, that they should do so. But, I suppose, it was not for your Purpose to give him more Light than you needs must, or than the Oration itself afforded, into those Matters. From some Passages thereof it should seem that the *Consensus* is chiefly an Assertion of the *sublapsarian* Opinions^a, which being now generally exploded there, and the contrary Doctrine, by the great Majority, embraced (which Change in their Sentiments, if I am rightly informed, has been chiefly owing to Mr. *Turretine* himself) they grew weary (and no Wonder) of subscribing to Forms, containing Doctrines so opposite to their private Judgments; and so, for the Peace of the Society (which, the Orator tells us, was like to be disturbed, and put into a Ferment, *on a thousand Occasions, particularly, when any one was to be received into the Ministry, who should refuse to subscribe*^b) and for the Quiet of their own Consciences, and to open a wider Door

^a I have not seen the *Consensus*; but we are told there is one Point asserted in it, which surely it was high Time to lay aside Subscription to, being no other than a Point of Criticism, about which the Learned have differed, and may differ very safely, without Prejudice or Danger to Religion, *viz.* that the *Hebrew* Points are of divine Original.

^b Page 162.

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to the Doctrines they wanted to introduce^a, it was thought proper that Subscription to these Forms should be abolished. If this *be* the Case, it will afford small Countenance and Support to your Principles and Reasonings upon this Head, as well as slender Encouragement to us, to lay aside our Subscriptions. And, in my humble Opinion, you have so little Reason to triumph in this Instance, and to take so much Pleasure, as you seem to do, in having given the World an *excellent Speech, which, you believe, has never before been published*, that you have disserved your Cause by producing it. For if there *was* Reason (as I think there *was*) for their laying aside Subscription to *sublapsarian* or *supralapsarian* Subtleties, some of the most thorny and intricate Questions in Divinity, is there the like Reason for *our* laying aside Subscription to *the Apostles Creed*, or to the greatest Part of the Articles of our Church, many of them containing the most important, and some of them the most essential and incontestable Verities of our Religion? And because they, or most of them, had swerved from the Doctrines which they were called to assent and subscribe to, and were, therefore, uneasy till their Subscriptions were removed, are *we* to be called upon to remove ours, *we*, who have no such Trouble and Division amongst us upon the Points to be assented and subscribed to? And would you persuade *us* to part with them, as a Means to preserve our *old* Doctrines, by shewing us the Example of those of *Geneva* doing the same, for the more easy Introduction of *new*?

I perceive you do not think there is any Need, and are *not* therefore for *removing Foundations*, in order to the projected Union betwixt us. On the contrary, I am well informed, and I hear with

^a Page 172.

Pleasure, you are not only a real Friend to the Episcopal Character, and think it an extremely useful Provision for the better Government of a National Clergy, but also esteem a Liturgy, for Public Worship, truly desirable^a. So far, Sir, I applaud your Judgment

^a These being your Sentiments concerning Liturgies, it is a Wonder you have not yet attempted to introduce into your Churches, or, at least, into your own Congregation, some Liturgy or other, or rather (considering the Work of Peace you are now travailing in) that of the Church of England, after you had altered it to your Mind, in those Passages which you esteem exceptionable. This would be acting agreeably to your Professions, and very properly too, in regard to the Character of a Reconciler, which you now appear in. It would be a handsome Advance towards the Church of England, and, if you could bring your Congregation into it, it would be an Encouragement to the Church to think of making such Alterations in the Liturgy as are demanded, by letting us see they were not like to be made in vain, and that to conquer the Prejudices of your People against a Liturgy, and reconcile them to the Use of it, is not so hard a Thing, as we, at present, may think it to be. I apprehend, you would not be the first among the Dissenters that has made an Attempt of this kind. For I presume it was one of yourselves, who published *A Solemn Form for the General Fast* observed 1740, and afterwards in 1741, *A Form of Divine Worship* for ordinary Use, printed for Richard Hett, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, with an earnest Recommendation of precomposed Forms of Divine Worship to all Dissenters. And I cannot forbear transcribing out of the Author's Preface a Passage, which (he tells us) he had before transcribed out of a Letter received from a very worthy Dissenting Minister in the Country, who needs Forms as little as most Men. "I entirely agree with you (says that Gentleman) that Forms should be used in Public Worship, and that it is fit the People should vocally join in the Adorations and Praises. There may be some few Ministers who stand in no Need of a Form; but the Generality of us want such Assistance very much; nor is it fit that the Devotion of a Congregation should depend upon the Temper, Preparation, and Abilities of a single Man; and when there is the Want of a proper Presence of Mind, with a less Capacity for speaking in Public, the Devotion must be cold and dead, and little edifying to the People. For want of a Form, Prayer is oftentimes a painful Thing, an Exercise of the Head only, without any Motion of the Heart and Affections." I am apt to believe there are Numbers of

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ment and Moderation, and earnestly intreat you to go on, as you are able, to inspire your Brethren and your People with the same Sentiments. But if you *really are not for removing Foundations*, it is a Mystery to me you should be so *eagerly bent upon throwing down Inclosures*; for, these once down, you may depend upon it, the Foundations will be continually pecking at, and soon shaken. Our Superiours are too sensible of this Danger, to give ear to your wild and extravagant Demands; and it was in you a strange Conceit, if you fancied you should ever be able to write them into it. They have too much Wisdom to part with the Securities they have; and yet Moderation enough to make any Condescensions and Abatements consistent with them, and in themselves reasonable, that will bring you back into the Bosom of the Church. Whenever you can prevail with yourselves to lower a little your Demands, and be content with Explanations and Softenings of the Declarations and Subscriptions required, instead of taking them quite away, and such other Alterations, in things indifferent and alterable, as you are perpetually, in your Writings, telling the World would satisfy, and reconcile you to the Church, and these Overtures shall come from *a competent Number of Men, fully agreed upon their Terms, and sufficiently authorized by their respective Sects*, they may deserve a public Consideration, and, doubtless, will have it; but assure yourself, not before. I am,

Nayland, Aug. 1,

SIR, &c.

1748.

of your Brethren in the same Sentiments concerning the Desirableness of a Liturgy for Public Worship, and it is Pity any of them should be afraid, or on any Consideration, decline openly to avow them.

E R R A T A.

Page 34, at Bottom, *read*, and I uniform.

Page 63, Line 27, *read*, in cooking up for me this Mess of nonsensical Reasoning.

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